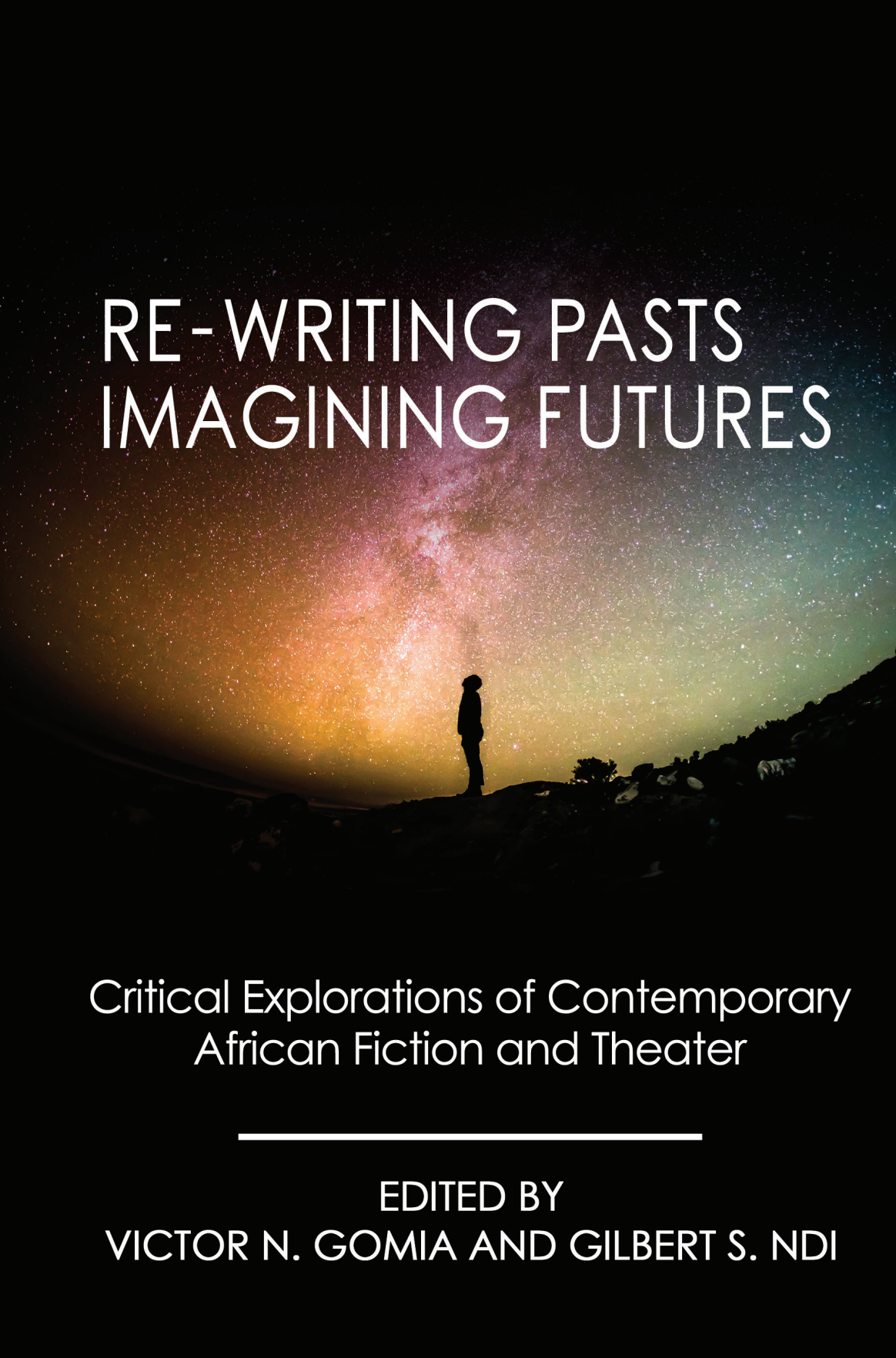




RE-WRITING PASTS IMAGINING FUTURES

Critical Explorations of Contemporary
African Fiction and Theater

EDITED BY
VICTOR N. GOMIA AND GILBERT S. NDI

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

RE-WRITING PASTS, IMAGINING FUTURES

Re-writing Pasts, Imagining Futures

***Critical Explorations of
Contemporary African Fiction and
Theater***

Edited by
Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi



Spears Media Press
DENVER
www.spearsmedia.com

SPEARS MEDIA PRESS LLC
DENVER
7830 W. Alameda Ave, Suite 103-247 Denver, CO 80226
United States of America

First Published in 2017 by Spears Media Press
www.spearsmedia.com
info@spearsmedia.com
Information on this title: www.spearsmedia.com/product/rewriting-pasts

© 2017 Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.

Ordering Information:

Special discounts are available on bulk purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the publisher at any of the addresses above.

ISBN: 978-1-942876-18-2 (Paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-942876-19-9 (ebook)

Spears Media Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

In memory of Prof. Dr. Eckard Breitinger

Contents

<i>In Memoriam</i>	ix
<i>Femi Osofisan</i>	
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
 Introduction	 1
<i>Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi</i>	
 CHAPTER 1	
Bayreuth-Africa Summer School: Model for North-South/South-South Partnerships and Cultural Knowledge Production and Transfer	10
<i>Christopher Odhiambo Joseph</i>	
 CHAPTER 2	
Historical Mythopoeia as Dramatic Resource: A Study of Selected plays by Amiri Baraka and Bate Besong	18
<i>Donatus Fai Tangem</i>	
 CHAPTER 3	
The Adaptation of History for Revolutionary Motifs in Femi Osofisan's Plays	43
<i>Onwukah Benjamin Orji-Mba</i>	
 CHAPTER 4	
'As it was in the Beginning...': Religious Fanaticism and the Quest for a New Messiah in the Plays of Derek Walcott and Bate Besong	56
<i>Yimbu Emmanuel Nchia</i>	
 CHAPTER 5	
Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Advent of Social Change in the Selected Novels of Nadine Gordimer and Nicholas Mhlongo	72
<i>Forti Etienne Langmia</i>	
 CHAPTER 6	
Triple Marginality in Cameroon Anglophone Literature	96
<i>Kenneth Toah Nsah</i>	
 CHAPTER 7	
Ayi Kwei Armah and the Pan-African Quest for an Ethical Future	111
<i>Gilbert Shang Ndi</i>	

CHAPTER 8

- Theorizing the Police State: Postcolonial Dystopia in Mongo Beti's
The Story of the Madman 125
Eric Nsub Zuhmboshi

CHAPTER 9

- Alobwed'Epie's *The Day God Blinked*: Complexities,
 Ambiguities and Contradictions in Female Representation 142
Eleanor Anneh Dasi

CHAPTER 10

- Globalization and Gender politics in the Indigenous African Society:
 Knowing the African Woman in *Tell It To Women* 156
Edwin Tangwa

CHAPTER 11

- Mythic Imagination and the Construction of Postdiasporic
 Identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* 169
Divine Che Neba and Didymus Dounla

Chapter 12

- Tracing the Beginnings and the Importance of Development
 Theater Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa 188
Victor N. Gomia

CHAPTER 13

- Tracking the Absence of Theorizing Applied Theatre in Africa 205
Victor S. Dugga

CHAPTER 14

- The Protest Theatrical Space in Twenty-first Century Social
 Media Oriented Africa: Re-assessing Bole Butake's *And Palmwine*
will Flow (1990) and Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (2014) 217
Irmagard Anchang Langmia

- List of Contributors* 235

- Index* 239

In Memoriam

GOODBYE, ECKHARD...

Femi Osofisan

And so, Eckhard too, has left. Some time ago, at a similar moment of loss,
I wrote the following lines:
One by one, the leaves detach
From the branches:
We do not know how the tree
Makes its choice—
They turn brown and glide
To the ground, without complaint:
One by one, our friends depart
Float down the tides of time

And slow, the evening gathers
Its leaves at our feet.
[Okinba Launko, “Leaves Falling,” *Seven Stations Up the Tray’s Way*, 2013]

Eckhard has left, so unexpectedly. Unexpected, because only the week before, we were there at his bedside at the hospital, and everything he said filled us with assurance that he was already happily on the road back to his feet.

But in retrospect now, it had all been a clever lie. Eckhard, like a trained actor, was deliberately leading us off the mark. Perhaps moved by our long faces—me, Biodun Jeyifo and Anne Adams, who had rushed in alarm to see him—he just wanted to assuage our fears. He, so much in need of assuagement in those last moments, still found enough generosity, and courage, to try to appease us, making light of his situation just to let us shed our burden of grief! And how well he played the game, such that we rushed back joyfully to our waiting colleagues at BIGSAS to give the cheering news!

It is that face however that I wish to remember, that I will always remember. It is the face that fits with those other moments that we have

been together, Eckhard and I—in his house, or more often in his car when he came to fetch me from the airport or the train station, or when he drove me later around the countryside, through the rolling hills and dales he knew I loved so much.

I don't know about you, but for me, a town is just a place or another name on the map, until I meet someone there who becomes a friend. For some others, of course, it is the landscape or the architecture or the monuments that make a place memorable. But not for me. Streets disappear from my memory; sculptures lose their concrete appeal; institutions however eminent or historic fade into anonymous recall, unless I am able to link them with persons I have met in these foreign places. That is perhaps why I have never been a good tourist, why my journeys are always an abstract experience, incomplete, till they yield an album of acquaintances and familiar faces.

Say Bayreuth therefore, and it is Eckhard's face that spontaneously crops up. And say Breitingen, and I immediately recall Bayreuth. But Eckhard is gone now, and I know the mourning must somehow come to an end. Fortunately, there are other friends still in Bayreuth. But it won't be the same, never again, because companionship has a unique identity, with no plural form. Eckhard has left, and taken his own laughter with him.

December 13, 2015.

Preface

It is a very unique honor for me to preface this volume of literary criticism that addresses pertinent trends in postcolonial African and Afro-diasporic fiction and theater. The volume was inspired by the contributions of Eckhard Breitingner to African literary and cultural studies, especially his mentorship of young African scholars that accompanied this effort. The breadth and depth of the essays in this volume speak to emerging, rich, insightful and innovative trends in African fiction and theater in an increasingly interconnected world. The diverse views of the contributors find a common ground in that the patterns of artistic visions are shaped and given impetus by the peoples' economic, political, social, technological and cultural realities; thus several of the essays are in dialogue with each other. This is what Eckhard Breitingner understood too well in his relentless contribution to the development of African literature and theatre. It would therefore be befitting on this preface to map a literary trajectory of the one to whom the collection is dedicated, especially given the obvious, befitting congeniality gleaned between the depth and breadth of the volume on one hand, and Eckhard Breitingner's intellectual profile on the other.

Eckhard Breitingner is a myth in Bayreuth and beyond, a pioneering figure of contemporary African Studies and beyond, and a visionary who was building futures for African Literatures. Beginning with the attainment in 1970 of a conventional comparative literature doctorate dealing with the subject of the English novel at the end of the 18th century – he himself called it a “satiated research field” – Eckhard Breitingner developed an extraordinary breadth in his life as a researcher. He knowingly ‘fled’ the field of conventional literature and science canons and moved towards ‘New Literatures in English’ – a field of studies yet to be built in Germany at the time, and it could not have found any better protagonist than Eckhard Breitingner. Within a decade he became part of an international network, transnationally oriented, transatlantically connected and methodically innovative, almost by necessity. Breitingner's research interests included literatures in the Caribbean and Africa, theater processes in Africa, as well as the development of radio and radio plays in the USA, or the rhetoric of US election campaign speeches. Except for the latter, this volume covers these areas. Since the end of the 1970s however, literature and theater of Africa

have definitely become the focal points of his work. Eckhard Breiting's scientific work includes about 150 essays, over 40 radio shows, and countless reviews, in addition to published monographs and numerous volumes. He was active as a copublisher of journals, as well as an advisor for comparative literature editions. In so doing, his research hardly failed to cover any of the great novels, plays and poems of African literatures' great 1970s and 1980s by such awesome authors such as Femi Osofisan, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Nuruddin Farah, Derek Walcott, Mongo Beti and Ama Ata Aidoo. Yet simultaneously he was focusing on popular arts and theater and Theater for Development with a most loving eye. And maybe this is what is most striking about his research – his unique intellectual brilliance was married to a true and sincere love for what he was reading and analyzing. He was not only working 'about' African literatures, they were his life. Thus tuned, he kept transcending the ivory tower of university life, eager to transport academic knowledge into all layers and wrinkles of society. In accordance with this, for example, he became a sought-after lecturer and consultant whose views were highly valued by German politicians, charities and other organizations. More than any other colleague of his time, Eckhard Breiting invested enormous efforts in raising funds to invite African writers and scholars to Germany – becoming one of the core figures of the Africa connection of both Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation (AvH) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Without wanting to outweigh one achievement with the others, one must mention one of Eckhard Breiting's activities because this appropriately supports his special position within the community of scholars of African literatures and cultures. Eckhard Breiting, on the one hand, aimed to make Africa and its cultures better known in Western archives, libraries, universities and sitting rooms, thus providing stages for African intellectuals to make their views heard. But he was not doing research about Africa/ns; he did it with Africans and in Africa, because he never stopped wanting to know, to learn, to celebrate the beauty of African (literary) knowledge. Several times a year, he travelled to Africa in order to follow in person the developments in the countries of his numerous friends and favorite novels, plays and poems. Many guest professorships since the 1980s gave him the opportunity to spend longer research stays for example, in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi, Cameroon and Kenya. Also belonging to these research-oriented travels are the trips to Western Europe and North American countries, which, in contrast to the research trips of many other scholars, are in Breiting's case everything but touristic undertakings. There, as much as in Germany, he presented and popularized the results of his work and those of his Africa-based colleagues. These include impressive photography exhibits on African theater, which he has presented so far in

Norway, Uganda, Denmark, Austria, Ghana, South Africa, Spain, as well as in various cities in Great Britain, the USA and Germany. Those who have ever experienced how Eckhard Breitinge dragged his exhibition boards literally through half the world, know the difference between research tourism and backbreaking labor.

But Eckhard Breitinge not only took his exhibition boards with him; in his luggage, there were usually also cases of books. At publisher presentations at large international conferences organized in North America, Europe and Africa, he mostly maintained his own stand, at which, in a happy calm, he offered books from his own production and at the same time renewed and made new contacts. To his list of most important accomplishments, one must undoubtedly add the founding of the scientific book series *Bayreuth African Studies Series* (BASS), which Eckhard Breitinge published in the company he founded for this very purpose – in the last years of his life together with his wife Pia Thielmann.

Being active at the University of Bayreuth between 1981 and 2005, it is thanks to Eckhard Breitinge that the University of Bayreuth has become a center for Germany's comparative literature studies on Africa. The BASS has cemented this position and made it known far beyond the boundaries of Germany. In this series, Breitinge published over 100 monographs and edited volumes, which, in English, French or the German language and dealt with aspects of literature, language, theater, music, sociology, religion or culture in Africa. Noteworthy in this series is also that Breitinge's publishing house is not oriented towards profit making. The proceeds earned with individual profits were always used to finance other projects, which would have otherwise been difficult to carry out. In this way, it was possible for Breitinge to offer a podium to scholars from Africa.

As a publisher, Eckhard Breitinge practiced what seems to be the agenda of his scholarly writings. He was part of the decolonization process because he, along with others, was one of the modernizers of the rusty German African studies. He overcame the boundaries of disciplines as well as of countries almost playfully. To him, only actual, scientific criteria counted, regardless of what is commonly perceived as 'right'. His attitude stands in contrast to the usual practices of academic life.

He also knew to take into consideration the objective disadvantages and homemade injustices in his numerous manifestations of giving others a hand. After all, with his book series, his exhibitions, his transatlantic network of students and academic admirers, his scientific work and his world travels, Eckhard Breitinge created a communication network of his own making. Without even meaning to, Eckhard Breitinge stands in the center of this network himself. Anyone who has ever experienced how Breitinge's house functions as a meeting point for communication among researchers from

around the world, will immediately understand the true meaning of hospitality. All this has made Eckhard Breitingger a very special scholar and one of the foremost representatives of the small circle of comparative African literary scholars in Germany.

Eckhard Breitingger has committed himself to live a life in the midst of African literature, theatre, poetry and knowledge, in general. In so doing, he has been a core protagonist in building archives of decolonized knowledge for a globalizing world. He tried his hands at what was said by many Germans and colleagues in Bayreuth to be the impossible. Against many odds and conflicts with those non-believers, he was constructing Western academic futures that keep learning to cherish the wisdom of decolonized knowledge. He was at home in the beautiful family of the African Literature Association (ALA) and it was due to him that this little town was known in the great halls of the ALA, thus paving the way for its very first annual convention in Europe in Breitingger's little Bayreuth in 2015 – unfortunately too late, though, to see him meeting the folks alive. Yet his spirit and soul have not missed this wonderful achievement of his. Eckhard Breitingger's work will have reached completion when globalization and migration are not perceived as crisis in Europe and when the isolation of Area Studies will be replaced by the celebration of global encounters and futures that are shared more evenly across the globe.

The present collection aptly represents Breitingger's vision while delving into innovative thematics and discourses that might have seemed unforeseeable in his time. I thus believe that readers will find this volume a great contribution to the decolonization of postcolonial knowledge and the mapping of new horizons of literary creativity cutting across fiction, theatre and popular cultures.

Susan Arndt¹
Bayreuth, 22 April 2017

Notes

1. Susan Arndt is Professor of English and Anglophone Literatures at the University of Bayreuth. Her research focuses mainly on West African women's writing, whiteness and race. Amongst other ground-breaking works, she is author of *The dynamics of African feminism: defining and classifying African-feminist literatures* (2000)

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard, Anne Adams and Susan Arndt of the academic committee of the African Literature Association (ALA) 2015 conference that held on the campus of the University of Bayreuth from the 3rd through the 6th of June. The committee accepted our proposal for a panel to discuss Eckhard Breitingner and his contribution to the growth and development of African Literatures and later added three more panels to accommodate a score of abstracts that was submitted on the subject. In post-session conversations, insightful forays into the various topics explored in the “Breitingner Panels” ensued on the hallways of the conference buildings. The need to extend or prolong the conversations was evident; however, time was not in our favor. What better alternative than to request that presenters on the panels submit their papers for publication in what would materialize into this volume? The fruitful and insightful responses are what constitute this volume.

We are grateful to our blind reviewers not only for their perceptive comments and recommendations, but also for rigorously reading through the manuscript and catching those errors that eluded us when the essays became too familiar. We appreciate the timely, collegial collaboration of our contributors, especially those whose submissions survived the scrutiny of our anonymous reviewers. It made editing the volume a joyful task.

Work on this project has been supported in part by the office of the provost and the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Delaware State University. Successive DEFL chairs during the past three years, Dr. Adenike Davidson and Dr. Joe Amoako, were very supportive of requests for funding that would facilitate attendance at two conferences abroad. We would also like to acknowledge all our colleagues of both the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Delaware State University and the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies BIGSAS of the University of Bayreuth for their encouragements during this project. Special appreciations go to Prof. Dr. Ute Fendler, Chair of Romance Literatures and Comparative Studies, University of Bayreuth and Gilbert Shang Ndi's host in Bayreuth within the framework of the Fritz Thyssen Fellowship. In this regard, we also extend our sincere acknowledgements to the Thyssen Foundation based in Cologne (Germany) for the fruition of this project. The

collaboration between these two structures made the rewarding Bayreuth encounters possible.

Introduction

Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi

In societies built on knowledge archives that are still, materially and epistemologically, under the grips of neocolonial institutions and in which the decolonization process seems to be considerably truncated and derailed, history and culture remain battlegrounds between different ideological constellations. Thus, the symbolic terrains of history and culture constitute indispensable paradigms for writers from postcolonial societies whose works unsettle and disrupt narratives and practices that impede societal and collective self-realization. The sociopolitical, economic and cultural realities of the postcolony can be most appropriately mapped and explored less through the more positivistic social sciences than through works of imagination (Angenot 2007:3). In postcolonial Africa, creative works have constituted some of the most efficient subversions of long-standing ideological engineering that have alienated the people from their history, culture and language, sometimes converting the subject into a conscious and unconscious agent of his/her own marginalization (Rabinow 1984:61). In the same line of thought, John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff assert that:

The essence of colonization inheres less in political overrule than in seizing and transforming 'others' by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them on terms not of their own choosing; in making them into the pliant objects and silenced subjects of our scripts and scenarios; in assuming the capacity (1991:15).

Thus, the most corrosive dimension of colonialism does not lie in its system of production of raw materials, rather in the putting in place a complex system that produces subjects with a blinkered vision of their own freedoms and place in the world. Literary writing in the postcolony can thus not afford the self-fetishistic luxury of 'writing for writing sake' even though the degree of engagement with the sociopolitical context differs between authors, texts and contexts. The political dimensions of this engagement may be multifarious and complex; nevertheless, postcolonial writings, from their very inception, have never reneged from confronting the deeply

rooted ideological currents that continue to underline social realities in the postcolony. The present collection seeks to analyze the representation of pertinent sociopolitical and historical questions in a variety of postcolonial texts from African and the African diasporas, notably the Caribbean islands and the United States of America. However, far from re-writing of history in a way that cedes to conservative worldviews, creative writers and critics simultaneously attempt to chart ways forward for socially inclusive futures. In this regard, the novel and drama genres have been at the forefront of the task of authorial and societal self-introspection, the quest into collective trajectories and the re-imagination of new collective possibilities for postcolonial societies.

Why these two literary genres? One is wont to say because of their inherent diversity, inclusiveness and productive hybridity that result from the cross-pollination between European and African cultures. These forms have undergone immense mutations with the passage of time and the advent of modern means of communication. The African novel, for example, developed at the interval of the African folktale and the Euro-American modernist novel to which many of the pioneer generations of African authors were introduced in the first waves of colonial educational institutions (Ndi Shang 2017: 26). African theater traces its ancestry or genealogy to the African oral culture and forms of role-play on the one hand and the introduction of Greek classical tradition and European epigones that were equally part of colonial and postcolonial education. Thus, these two genres are invested with creative potentials and stylistic complexities that make them apt for re-imagining complex Africa and African diasporic cultures. It suffices here to state that the politically charged contexts in which African and Afro-diasporic texts are produced do not in any way diminish their aesthetic vitality and complexity or subjugate them to a rather overbearing political didacticism. On the contrary, it is the combination of this political context with the inherently hybrid genealogies of African and Afro-diasporic writings that now procure them such high standing in literary criticism worldwide. It is thus not surprising that, from mere appendages to metropolitan literatures in the colonial era, postcolonial texts have come to threaten the hitherto uncontested and canonical status of Western literature. The complex matrices of the novel and drama also invest them with the potential for adaptability, flexibility, further development and expressive channels. Rapid innovations in technology thus entail immense consequences in terms of the ability of the genres to surpass and even subvert normative generic frontiers. The radio, the TV and the recent phenomenon of new social media are all technological innovations that have greatly revolutionized the creative conception, the aesthetic experience and the outreach potential of these two literary media. Thus, the novel and drama keep undergoing transformations, according

authors a variety of avenues and possibilities of contact with the larger public (Standage 2013:239). Given the novelty of these developments, there is an urgent need for adequate theoretical postulations aimed at analyzing the transformative effect of new technological innovations with regard to literary creativity.

The above accounts for the breadth and depth of this collection of articles which focus mainly on fiction and theater, in their traditional forms but also in their encounters with new avenues of dissemination which have become complex and innovative media of creativity in their own rights. As a cultural practice that emerged from a process of protest and contestation of hegemony, it is understandable that one main concern in African literature and literary criticism (would be seen in a number of chapters in this collection) should be the resistance against the emergence of marginalizing centers in formerly or currently marginalized societies with regard to discourses, aesthetics and media of creation. These new centers that sometimes undermine the strategic/tactical exploitation of the relative advantage procured by each medium run the risk of leading to new forms of stratification that mitigate the import of African and African diasporic literatures. This perhaps explains why postcolonial criticism, as witnessed in the present collection, constitutes a negotiating critical space between elements of deconstructive criticism and the libertarian underpinnings of Marxist thought (Ndi Shang 2017).

The present collection underlies the contribution of Africa and its literature in redrawing global cartography. One of the underlying phenomena behind present-day geopolitical realities and the possibilities of connectivity is globalization. The entire configuration of the colonial relations and the wide-ranging African diasporas are undeniable consequences of globalization with regard to the world system economy and global capitalism (Wallerstein 2000). The histories of black race used as exchange value in the slave economy are now entangled with recent African diasporas in the Western hemisphere triggered amongst others by the indirect impacts of the structural adjustment programs, economic malaise and failures of democratization processes in Africa. Concurrently, these processes of dissemination have led to subversive engagement with universalizing claims of Western religion, epistemology, language and aesthetics. In the era of increasing global interconnectedness, it behooves us to critically engage with the global processes, epistemologies, objects, icons and material cultures in ways that do not efface minority cultures. This explains why globalization has paradoxically led to *glocalization*, the attempt to put the imprints of the local on the putatively global trends and to unveil the localizable trajectories of what is considered uncritically considered as naturally global or universal, often the preserve of Western cultures. In other words, universalism is a mark of distinction that is achieved as a result of a certain dynamic of

(unequal) power relations. This is not to deny the strategic import of the phenomenon but rather to underline the fact that globalization calls for an ethic and aesthetic of negotiation which, while remaining attuned to the valency of basic human values, acknowledge contextual specificities. Thus, embracing mainstream feminism, postmodernism, formalism, neoliberalism without prior interrogations might lead to the formation of hegemonic caucuses within the movement itself. This may end up reproducing the very ills which the apparently libertarian ideologies seek to address.

Structure of the Book

The book begins with a preface by Prof. Dr. Susan Arndt, a respectable scholar in Anglophone postcolonial studies and a close collaborator of the late Prof. Dr. Eckhard Breiting, in whose honor the collection has been conceived and realized.

The first paper in this collection is a critical reflection on the contribution of late Prof. Dr. Breiting to African Studies especially with regard to African and Afro-Caribbean literatures by Christopher J. Odhiambo, a former student and close collaborator of the former. In “Bayreuth-Africa Summer School: Model for North-South/South-South Partnerships and Cultural Knowledge Production and Transfer” Christopher constitutes an insightful assessment of the Bayreuth - Africa Summer Schools that were initiated by Prof. Dr. Eckhard Breiting of the Institute of African Studies at Bayreuth University in collaboration with African students and researchers in Bayreuth, Germany. Based on an experimental model of knowledge sharing and scientific corporation, the author examines how the concept of Summer Schools became an apt site for the enhancement of cultural productions and performance of the transfer of knowledge. The paper attempts to explicate how the hosting Universities in collaboration with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD – Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), Bayreuth University and a number of Bayreuth-African scholars simultaneously created an opportunity for creation, exchange and transfer of knowledge.

Donatus Fai Tangem’s “Historical Mythopoeia as Dramatic Resource: a study of selected plays by Amiri Baraka and Bate Besong” analyses the background formations and motivational groundwork of Amiri Baraka and Bate Besong. The author examines the historico-political contexts within which the two playwrights have produced their most provocative plays and underlines the solidarities between them, mapping the ways in which overbearing histories of oppression have impacted both their vision and the aesthetics of their works. To that effect, the Anglophones in Cameroon, like the Blacks in America suffer similar sociopolitical, economic and cultural

depravity that emanate from the structural forces loyal to the historical formations based on marginalization. By rooting their plays within the facts and facets of history, this author demonstrates how the historical resource provides the launch pad for the soaring literary enterprises of the two playwrights. Against such a hypothetical connection, their dramas arraign, interrogate and indict the same history for its complacency in the complex tale of captivity, marginalization and depersonalization.

Onwukah Benjamin Orji-Mba's paper "Adaptation of History for Revolutionary Concerns in Femi Osofisan's Plays" discusses the deconstructive dimension of Femi Osofisan's historiography with regards to traditional systems of hegemony. Using the New-Historicist approach, the author examines Femi Osofisan's incorporation and use of history in his plays to bring about an egalitarian Nigerian society. Femi Osofisan's plays center mostly on the problem of social injustices and the playwright's avowed vision of creating a society of social equality. Orji-Mba's analyses of four of Osofisan's plays reveal that the author's use of history is meant to conscientize the audience about the intricacies of its history which perpetually becomes a hand tool of the powerful to perpetuate their control and lordship over the masses. He thereafter reconstructs the historical facts in such a way that the masses reconsider official history and re-imagine a history that accords them primordial roles in charting the course of a new social order in the society.

Yimbu E. Nchia's paper "As it was in the Beginning...: Religious Fanaticism and the Quest for a New Messiah in the Plays of Derek Walcott and Bate Besong" examines the predatory role played by religion (Christianity) as portrayed in the plays of Derek Walcott and Bate Besong. From a Marxist theoretical paradigm, his paper reveals that Walcott and Besong's plays are sustained dramatic critiques of Western religious ideology as a solution to the plight of the suffering masses. His analyses engage with these playwrights' text as a religious counter-discourse to deconstruct the notion of a supreme being responsible for people's political, economic and cultural liberation by inventing characters with similar super-natural powers like God, yet deeply rooted in the culture and spirit of the indigenous people. The playwrights, Nchia argues, show in their plays that Christianity has proven unsuccessful in providing the colonized masses with the presumed messiah and as such, the playwrights are in search of a new messiah who from the context of the plays, must emerge from the ranks of the postcolonial masses themselves.

Forti E. Langmia's contribution "Post-apartheid South Africa and the Advent of Social Change in Selected Novels of Nadine Gordimer and Nicholas Mhlongo" focuses on post-apartheid South Africa under the African National Congress (ANC) leadership and its efforts in fostering a sense of nationhood in post-apartheid South Africa. Drawing from Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and *The House Gun* and Mhlongo's *Get a Life, Dog*

Eat Dog and *After Tears* respectively, the author examines the efforts of the country's new democratic government in recreating a collective identity in a multiracial and democratic nation. In this regard, he examines Mhlongo and Gordimer's portrayals of Post-1994 South African society as one emerging from its chaotic past, as the new leadership struggles to implement policies meant at changing and improving the situation of the once officially disfavored population, predominantly blacks. While acknowledging considerable shortcomings, the analyses demonstrate how South Africa's new democratic leadership has engaged in nation-building projects through transformative policies in the domains of education, social welfare, promotion of equal opportunities for blacks and whites and accountability in state institutions.

Gilbert Shang Ndi's article, "Ayi Kwei Armah and the Pan-African Quest for an Ethical Future" examines Ayi Kwei Armah's persistent attempt at re-imagining the sociocultural and political futures of African societies based on an ethical approach to the regeneration of the political sphere. In his representation of postcolonial power systems as a legacy of colonial power relations, he argues that Armah's works constitute a forceful struggle against the coloniality of power, a concept which Anibal Quijano defines as the reconfiguration of power relations in former colonial societies on models of European capitalism and Eurocentric cultural ethic (2008:188). He underlines the fact that Armah's imagination of an "ethical turn" in African society and politics is posited on the primacy of individual self-interrogation as the pre-condition for a collective re-foundation of African sociopolitical ethos. He goes further to argue that Armah's representation of a possible ethical future is premised on a critical consideration of memory, indispensable for the re-invention of the past, the interrogation of the present and the radical envisioning of the future.

The conditions and welfare of the people in an African postcolonial setting constitute Eric Zuhmboshi's preoccupation in "Theorizing the Police State: Postcolonial Dystopia in Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman*". Using Marxist criticism, Zuhmboshi postulates that Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman* portrays a setting in which political independence has not been of any palpable advantage to African citizens despite the hopes and expectations it aroused in African societies. He argues that the new leaders who have taken over the destiny of most postcolonial African states have paralleled and in some cases even surpassed their colonial forbearers. Most post-independence African leaders, he avers, have tended to be the aggressors of their own people, converting their countries into police states. Zuhmboshi, therefore, questions the *raison d'être* of political independence, arguing further that because the vision of the struggle for independence has been curtailed and the fallouts of independence have only benefited the postcolonial ruling oligarchy and their neocolonial masters, there is a dire need to rethink new

strategies for grassroots inspired change of the social order.

Eleanor A. Dasi “Alobwed’Epie’s *The Day God Blinked*: Complexities, Ambiguities and Contradictions in Female Representation” scrutinizes the general discourses on the liberation of women, positing that the advent of Western modernity has not completely freed the African woman from male domination. Her paper rests on the contention that the modern African woman vacillates between traditional conceptions of womanhood and modern perspectives that move towards creating new female spaces that subvert gender divides. As a result, the quest for equality, independence and self-fulfillment becomes inconclusive as evident in literary representations. Rather, the struggle for a voice should be considered as an ongoing process characterized by reversals in which former gains could be lost, renegotiated or re-conquered anew.

Ntumfon E. Tamgwa in “Globalization and gender politics in the indigenous African society: knowing the African woman in *Tell it to women*” examines ways in which globalization and the attendant rapprochement of initially distant knowledge systems invariably lead to gender reconfiguration. Using Edward Said’s colonial discourse theory and the Feminist approach to literary analysis, his paper argues that the biological reality of gender is far removed from the social reality that shapes gender identity (and identification). The author further posits that it is not physical/biological difference that accounts for the *ethnic* status of the female gender but the social construction of *difference*, which in other words, is the fact of attaching social “meaning” to a biological phenomenon. He thus interrogates the radical feminist assertion of a “separate female identity” beyond biological difference (a separate social identity) in the play in an era of globalization as a reactionary exertion that perpetuates rather than disarms the ‘ethnicization’ of the female gender.

Divine Che Neba and Didymus Tsangue Douanla in “Mythic Imagination and the Construction of a Post-diasporic Identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*” discusses Gurnah’s representation of a vibrant coastal African city as a multi-ethnic postcolonial diaspora with an intricate nexus of selfhood whose resolution calls for the construction of a viable postdiasporic identity. The article examines the role of myth in the construction of this identity – how characters tap into the recesses of myth, deconstruct the past and hence fashion an acceptable sense of self. They proceed to show how Gurnah attempts to resolve the question of identity by exploring characters’ mythic imagination and revamping it with a plethora of mythologies from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. This gives room for characters to deconstruct memory (both personal and cultural) and subvert otherness. In view of this, the work operates on the contention that Gurnah’s picturization of a viable postdiasporic identity on a rich tapestry of oneiric symbols

proffer alternative mythoforms by which individuals and communities can organize unique experiences and aspirations.

Victor N. Gomia in “Tracing the Beginnings and the Importance of Development Theater Practice in Africa” chronicles the emergence of Development Theater experiments in Africa in the early nineteen seventies, a practice he argues is rooted in part in precolonial communal functions in communities across the continent. Providing compelling accounts of Development Theater practice in Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cameroon, Gomia opines that Development Theater has proven to be one of the key areas of cultural engineering that serves as a point of departure in participatory development initiatives. In his view, it served and has continued to serve very relevant social functions in the continent as it is employed in community education initiatives to mobilize and educate the voiceless in African communities, most of whom do not have access to education as a cultural pedagogical practice as obtained within school and University systems or in the mass media.

Victor S. Dugga in “Tracking the Absence of Theorizing Applied Theatre in Africa” calls for the need to actively engage in critical discussion of the vibrant culture of engaging with communities through Theater for Development. After discussing the state of the lack of theoretical impetus in that field, the author proposes that along teaching students the methodology, curriculum in universities should include the aspect of theory as the driving force for new learning and new frontiers for Tfd. The advantage of doing this, he argues, is that it would help set the agenda for what ought to be priority for the practitioners. As theater looks for ways in which it can be further applied to the complex issues in society, theorizing about the work that has been done thus far and continues to be done may well help to shape the way into the future.

Irmagard A. Langmia in “The Protest Theatrical Space in Twenty-first Century Social Media Oriented Africa: Re-assessing Bole Butake’s *And Palmwine will Flow* (1990) and Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (2014)” addresses challenges posed by the explosive emergence of twenty-first century social media communication platforms that provide alternate theatrical protest outlets to Africans, thereby attracting more audiences to out-house protest theatrical spaces than in-house. Specifically, her article re-assesses the role of in-house protest theatre as a source of entertainment in a media oriented Africa in order to fit it within a contemporary social media sphere that persistently challenges its vision for the future. Two theatrical perspectives are closely examined in terms of space. Drawing examples from Egypt and Burkina Faso, the author argues that global means of communication through social media in out-house political spaces have yielded faster results in achieving democratic change in some countries as opposed to previous

centuries. She proposes different ways through which proponents of in-house protest theatre can address challenges posed by social media communication platforms so as to attract more audiences.

Works Cited

- Angenot, Marc. "Que Peut La Littérature? Sociocritique Littéraire et Critique du Discours Social" in *La Politique du Texte. Enjeux Sociocritiques*. <http://marcangenot.com/wpcontent/uploads/2012/04/Que-peut-lit%C3%A9rature.pdf>. Accessed June 2009.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*. Vol. 1. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Quijano, Anibal. "The Coloniality of Power" in *Coloniality at Large: America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Moraña, Mabel *et al.* Eds. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Rabinow, Paul. *The Foucault Reader. An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. London: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Ndi Shang, Gilbert. *State/Society: Narrating Transformations in Selected African Novels*. Berlin: Lit- Verlag, 2017.
- Standage, Tom. *Writing on the Wall: Social Media, the First 2000 Years*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: The New Press, 2000.

CHAPTER 1

Bayreuth-Africa Summer School

Model for North-South/South-South Partnerships and Cultural Knowledge Production and Transfer.

Christopher Odhiambo Joseph

Introduction: Configuring Bayreuth-Africa Summer School Model

This article attempts to configure the Bayreuth-Africa Summer School concept as an apt model for the North-South-South knowledge production and transfer relations. In a sense, the paper locates this Summer School concept as a site upon which new possibilities of transcending the traditional paradigms of North-South (ideological) polarities of domination can be re-imagined. The concept of Bayreuth-Africa Summer School was conceived by Prof. Dr. Eckhard Breitingner of the Institute of African Studies at Bayreuth University in Germany with the financial support of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

The first Summer School took place in Bayreuth University in Germany in 1999 hosted by Prof. Breitingner. It assembled a number of scholars, postgraduate students and cultural producers and activists from both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. This included participants from India, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Germany, United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and South Africa. The broad theme of this first Summer School was 'Cultural Productions and Conflict Resolutions'. A cursory view of the first Summer School would suggest that it was yet just another effort to entrench the traditional North-South domination ideologies. But a more critical engagement with its configuration reveals the contrary. The first Summer School was indeed a fairly level ground of engagement by cultural scholars and producers from both poles. There was mutual sharing of knowledge and ideas without any of the hemispheres patronizing

or dominating the debates and conversations. The unique dimension of the Summer School was that it brought together established scholars, cultural producers/activists and postgraduate student to exchange knowledge and ideas on their ongoing projects in the diverse field of cultural production and conflict resolution. More importantly, the Summer School collapsed the nexus of theory and practice while creating a space for the postgraduate students to engage with established scholars and experienced practitioners. Thus the structure of the Summer School facilitated a highly pragmatic transfer of ideas and knowledge. The interesting dimension of the Summer School concept is the way that it has responded to the needs of the scholars in the South. After the Germany experience, the Summer School moved to the South permanently. It has been hosted by Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Moi University (Kenya), Dar-es-Salaam University (Tanzania), Buea University (Cameroon), Chancellor College (Malawi) and University of Botswana (Botswana).

Summer School: Beyond the politics of the North-South Knowledge production and Transfer

A cursory view of the Bayreuth-Africa Summer School program would readily lead one to conclude that this is just another enterprise in the continuum of the North-South unequal relationship. Indeed, the initial Summer School that took place at Bayreuth University appeared as if it would follow the trodden path where the North, because of its funding capability would set the agenda for the scholars, researchers and practitioners from the South. However, to the satisfaction of the participants, this was not the case. Other than the sponsorship from DAAD, the agenda of the Summer School was a collaboration of all the participants. Indeed, Bayreuth was just a site where the scholars from the different parts of the globe assembled to engage on the emerging issues in cultural production and conflict resolution. Even at its nascent stage the Summer School was already a site for contesting the notions of the North as the originator of knowledge and the South as the passive recipient. It is a paradox that though the site of engagement was in the North, the knowledge producers and receivers were mainly from the South. Admittedly, the knowledge produced and shared at this meeting would eventually find its way back to the South.

But a more radical shift in the Summer School concept would be its transmigration to the South as a site of engagement. This would signify a move from the near linear North-South relation to a more triangular North-South-South relationship. This shift resonates closely with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's ideas about the place of African Literatures within the global perspective, in his book of essays, *Moving the Centre: The Struggles for Cultural*

Freedoms, when he notes that: “it did point out the possibility of moving the centre from its location in Europe towards pluralism of centres; themselves being equally legitimate locations of human imagination” (1993:9).

Akin to Ngugi’s observation, the shift of physical location of the Summer School from Bayreuth to different academic centers in Africa in a way legitimized and validated these plural centers as well as the cultural knowledge that they produced and disseminated as worthy of serious scholarly and academic attention. The significance of this shift to new centers in Africa was that it provided scholars, researchers and culture practitioners from the Southern hemisphere leverage in terms of determining the agenda, the number of participants and the mode of scholarly engagements. Thus the Summer Schools as imagined by Breitingner would recognize as Ngugi aptly articulates though for a different context that: “Knowing oneself and one’s environment was the correct basis of absorbing the world; that there could never be only one centre from which to view the world but that different people in the world had their cultures and environment as the centre” (1993: 9). For instance, the Summer School that was hosted by Stellenbosch University (SA), though funded by DAAD through Breitingner was actually conceptualized and implemented by the host University. The theme of this Summer School- “Cultural Production and Social Transformation” provided the participants with an opportunity to scrutinize how the South Africans were grappling with issues of transition having just emerged from the repressive apartheid system. Of import was that the participants created and shared knowledge on how theater could be used effectively in transformation, reconciliation and healing. The significant dimension of this Summer School was the infusion of performances exploring the questions of traumatic effects of apartheid and the possibilities of healing memories imbued in theater as a form of therapy and catharsis. The use of professional facilitators from the theater company, *Change Moves* was also instrumental in the production and transfer of knowledge. Thus through the theater space, the participants from diverse regions of the Southern Hemisphere shared knowledge which they were expected to diffuse to their own communities when they returned to their countries of origin. Postgraduate students who attended this Summer School also benefitted immensely from peer criticism as well as guidance from established scholars. The structure of the Summer School provided an enabling ambiance for transfer of knowledge within the South.

Casting the Net of Knowledge Production and Transfer Wider

The Summer School configuration and framing interestingly seems to mutate from one Summer School to the next. The one that took place in

Moi University (Eldoret-Kenya) brought together theatre practitioners from different Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations, undergraduate students, Postgraduate students, Cultural Productions scholars and researchers. This meant that the ideas as knowledge generated in this Summer School reached as many stakeholders as possible. The Summer School framed within the theme, “Cultural Productions and HIV-AIDS Intervention”, assembled an array of participants from Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Cameroon, South Africa, Nigeria, USA and Germany. The important aspect of this Summer School was that it echoed what Brian Martin (1998) refers to as ‘demystifying disciplinary elites’ as it enabled the free flow of knowledge between authorities in the discipline and upcoming scholars and practitioners. This approach was replicated to some extent in Summer Schools that took place in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), University of Buea (Cameroon) Chancellor College (Malawi) and University of Botswana (Botswana).

The Merits of Summer School: Trans-regional Networking and Linkages

Even the most desultory view of the configuration of the Bayreuth-Africa Summer Schools concept reveals its immense potential for trans-regional linkages, networking and knowledge transfer. Indeed, the concept opened avenues for students and scholars to correspond both formally and informally. Postgraduate students received both intellectual and material support from each other as well as from the more established scholars. Through the interactions from the Summer School the Cameroonian playwright Bole Butake, one of the more senior participants has popularized his play-texts which have, as a result, become part of the teaching curriculum in a number of universities within the Summer School circuit. But of more fundamental importance, a number of books and journal articles have been published by participants of the Summer School from their critical transactions with Butake’s literary and dramatic imaginaries. The same applies to the Ugandan scholar and poetess Susan Kiguli whose anthology of poems, *The African Saga* was popularized during the first Summer School in Bayreuth and has since become a primary teaching text in a number of universities that participated in that Summer School. A number of the Summer School participants have also been identified as external examiners and curriculum evaluators amongst the participating universities in the South. As such the configuration of the Summer School has promoted leverage of personnel as well as the trans-regional migration of ideas and knowledge within the network circuit institutions. For instance, there has been exchange of teaching staff between Moi University and Stellenbosch University as a result of mutual

relationship developed during the Summer Schools. Many students who participated in the Summer School in Malawi also benefitted scholarships to pursue further studies at the Wits School of Arts programme Drama for Life (DfL) as a result of one of their lecturers being a member of the Summer School network circuit and I, gaining membership in the committee of the Drama for Life (DfL) programme. Through the Summer School network and linkages the Creative Arts students had the opportunity to share experiences of creative writing with the Ugandan novelist and media personality, Ayeta Wangusa. Critical works produced by a number of Summer School participants have also been introduced as teaching material in the institutions within the network. Some of the invaluable publications in the fields of theatre and postcolonial literatures, all published by the Bayreuth Africa Series, are authored by members of the workshops such as Peter Simatei, John Tikku Takem, Eckhard Breiting, Christopher Odhiambo, Victor S. Dugga, Hilarious Ambe, Mercy Mirembe, Emelda Ngufor Samba and Mforbe Perpetual Chiangong.

Summer School Concept: Transcending North-South Relations' Stereotypes

A reading of the North-South knowledge transfer literatures vindicates the concept of the Bayreuth-Africa Summer School from the usual power plays and domination of the North on the scholars and researchers from the South. The Summer Schools were organized in such a way that the hosting institution in the South only received the financial support from DAAD through Prof. Dr. Eckhard Breiting but configured the agenda and structure on its own. In fact, the vision of each Summer School was imagined by the hosts. This meant that there was very little influence from the funder on the agenda of the specific Summer School as well as the kind of knowledge to be produced and circulated. More pertinently the configuration of the Summer School concept challenged the received notion that knowledge always flows from more developed universities of the North to South and hardly between South and South universities. It seems most likely that Breiting's motivation to have the Summer Schools rotate in the different academic centres in the South was largely informed by his own understanding of the North-South development model as he articulated quite eloquently in regard to theater for development below:

The rise of Theatre for Development also marked a change in international relations. It was both the symptom and the result of the failures of 20 years of development policies that had insisted on the implantation of the materialist and technological culture

of the North as the only possible road to the development, irrespective of the cultural and social environment. Characteristic of this style of development policies was the remote control on all levels – defining and designing of development goals, administering financial, material and human resources, implementation and surveillance of planning objectives. The target communities were mostly reduced to the state of recipient beneficiaries lorded over by donors (1994:E7-8).

The way that the Summer Schools were configured affirms that knowledge can be created and circulated within the networking national universities and the communities surrounding them. The implications for this configuration were that knowledge created was context-specific and therefore relevant to the conditions and circumstances of the recipients. The vision of the Summer School to borrow from Micere Githae Migo (sic) would help in “transforming government or donor funding research policies so that they include people as primary participants and stakeholders in knowledge production right from the inception of (our) projects” (33). Thus, the vision of the Bayreuth-Africa Summer Schools can be viewed in similar terms to David Gutierrez’s (2008) ideas on ‘transforming ideology and practice in North-South research partnerships’ where the domination of the North is undermined. In the Summer School configuration, partnerships and participation were always privileged as the vision placed emphasis on capacity building and transfer of knowledge among the networking nations of the South. In addition, the fact that the Summer Schools mainly took place in the South meant that many participants came from the South. For instance, it was possible for many scholars, students and practitioners from the hosting institution and nation to be involved. Indeed, when Moi University hosted many scholars, students and cultural production workers in the fields of cultural production and HIV/AIDS had the opportunity to participate. The same did happen in the case of Tanzania, Malawi, Cameroon, Botswana and South Africa.

The Summer School, as a program of knowledge production and transfer indeed “targeted specific individuals whose expanded human capital has a multiplier effect” (Abdenur 2000:66). The participants were members of faculty or practitioners in communities in various universities in the South who were supposed to be in a position to share the knowledge produced and received with others. For instance, on the one hand, in the case of a member of a faculty, the knowledge would necessarily be transferred through teaching and publications in various forms. While for the practitioner, on the other hand, the knowledge would be transferred directly to the communities through best practice in performances or workshops. This also ensured

that the knowledge was adapted to local contexts. Other advantages of the configuration and structuration of the Summer Schools that concur with literatures on modes of knowledge transfer was that tacit knowledge transfer assumed that participants had a close and lengthy human interaction as the one that the Summer Schools provided. The participants of the Summer School developed durable contacts from interaction from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s meeting virtually every year for at least ten days; in the process developing patience and trust with each other as well as learning more about each other's context and area of specialization. The composition of the participants in Summer School also offered diversity since they (participants) were of different backgrounds: education, environment, culture and several other disciplines. This provided fodder for the participants to gain new knowledge from each other. The Summer Schools were, therefore, potential sites of opportunity for the interaction of both global and local knowledge as well as best practice and local practice.

It is in this broad sense that the Bayreuth-Africa Summer School concept seems to subvert and transcend the earlier notions of the North as the "giver" of knowledge and the South as passive "receiver" based on the top-down approaches to development ideologies and philosophies. The Summer School concept envisaged an authentic partnership, shared ownership and decision-making strategies between the funder from the North and the knowledge creators and users in the South. As such, in this arrangement the North remained more of a catalyst in the process than an active participant in the agenda making of the knowledge creation and dissemination. It is in this regard that one views a shift from the usually skewed North-South dichotomy to an equal triangular North-South-South network and linkage.

Works Cited

- Abdenur, Adriana "Tilting the North-South Axis: The Legitimization of Southern Development Knowledge and its Implication for Comparative Education Research." *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Vol. 4 (2) 2002 57 - 69
- Breitinger, Eckhard. (Ed.). *Theatre for Development*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies 36, 1994
- Gutierrez, David. "Beyond Disappointment: Transforming Ideology and Practice in North-South Research Partnerships". Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. NN41 December 2008
- Horoon, Park. "From Imitation to Innovation: Technology Transfer and Adaptation: North-South and South-South." No. 1, 2000 pp. 91-98
- Martin, Brian. "The Politics of Research", *Information Liberation*. London: Freedom Press, 1998. pp. 123-142.
- Migo (sic) Githae Mugo. The Role of African Intellectuals and 'The Way Forward' for Social Sciences", *Confronting Twenty-First Century Challenges*.

Ed. Ruth Mukama Murindwa-Rukinga Vol. 1 pp. 27-40

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. Nairobi.

EAEP/ London: James Currey, 1993.

Zezeza, Tiyaambe Paul. *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises*. CODESRIA, 1997.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Mythopoeia as Dramatic Resource

A Study of selected plays by Amiri Baraka and Bate Besong

Donatus Fai Tangem

An in-depth analysis of the drama of Amiri Baraka and Bate Besong betrays similar bitterness and profound commitment to the indictment of the historical formations that the playwrights view as responsible for the woes and throes of the people. The same ire imbues in both artists a high sense of protest against the sociopolitical set-up. In their literary binoculars, Baraka and Besong demonstrate not only their protest and congenital urge towards deconstructing the social and political paradigms, but they also replay the historicity of the text and the textuality of history. Through these, the playwrights demonstrate how the socioeconomic as well as romantic/sentimental relations are influenced by race and history. In affinity with this traditional relationship between history and literature, Robert DiYanni, in *Drama: An Introduction*, argues that:

When the prism of history is used to clarify and explain elements of the literary work, however, whether in examining intellectual currents, describing social conditions or presenting cultural attitudes, reader's understanding of the literary works can be immeasurably enriched. The challenge for historical understanding, whether one uses the tools of the older historicist's tradition or the methods of the new historicism, is to ascertain what the past was truly like, how its values are inscribed in its cultural artefacts, including its literature (2000:621).

In the foregoing, Robert DiYanni tacitly argues not only for the immeasurable fall-outs and the profits of new historicism, but also graphically situates the context within which this paper is based. By emphasizing the

crucial place of history in “examining intellectual currents, describing social conditions or presenting cultural attitudes”, the author indirectly validates the primordial place of history in literature, showing how one nourishes the other. In their duality of existence for mutual representation, history penetrates literature and literature on its part accommodates history in order to highlight and educate the society based on practical experience and the interpretation of signs and symbols. In the end, a careful combination of the insightful flashes of historical events, persons, and concepts tells a complete story and background of a people. A quick look at the plays of Baraka and Besong confirm the duo as historical realists seeking to highlight the crucial role of history in the contemporary struggles of humans in their environment. Guerin. L underlines this point when he holds that:

New historicism brings literature from the arm’s length at which it has been held into broader contexts... after all we no longer regard history as a given backdrop against which to see the literary text, but as partner with which the literary text goes into endless inseparable intercourse (1982: 325).

The Place of History in Literature

Examples abound in which the drama of Baraka and Besong tap generously into historical resources. In his *Dutchman*, Baraka for example drills deep into a history that irresistibly suggests and replicates the trauma of the first “Negars” who were brought to Jamestown in 1619. The title “Dutchman” clearly recalls the dreaded Dutchman-of-War vessel that was part of the deportation of Africans into the bondage of the “New World”. As a matter of fact, *Dutchman* oscillates around Clay, a middle-class young Black man whose attempts to resist the overwhelming pressure of a White prostitute, Lula, lead to his tragic death. The drama unfolds in the subway train station where Lula, professing love, approaches Clay, the middle-aged black man. Apparently overwhelmed by the pressure of racial considerations, Clay decides to offer himself a momentary psychological leap from “blackness” by donning a three-piece suit with a hat and reading a newspaper. At least such reassuring posture offers Clay the needed feeling of accomplishment and a way to integrate the white space, even if only temporarily. Unfortunately, the posture of self-importance and attempted racial leap paradoxically becomes the very *raison d’être* for his undoing. Lula, the white lady who approaches him professing love, is a veritable agent provocateur with a hideous agenda. His attempted spiritual escape from the Black world by hiding “his pumping black heart” beneath his three-piece suit inevitably leads to his actual death. Further flashes of the history of blacks in America are in the mock amorous

romance and dalliances with Lula. While they enjoy romantic fantasies on the coach in the moving train and are completely oblivious of the world around them, Lula suddenly notices that many more passengers are gazing at them. She embarrasses Clay Williams with a question

Lula: Oh yeah, about them...do they frighten you?

Clay: *Frighten me? Why should they frighten me?*

Lula: 'Cause you're an escaped nigger.

Clay: *Yeah?*

Lula: 'Cause you crawled through the wire and made tracks to my side.

Clay: *Wire?*

Lula: Don't they have wires around plantations (Dutchman: 29)?

In this excerpt, Lula makes a satirical allusion to the question of slavery, an institution that presaged the fate of Blacks who were brought to the United States as slaves to work in plantations. As if to confirm the injustices and wickedness of history, Clay adds, "plantations were big open whitewashed places like heaven; and everybody on 'em was grooved to be there. Just strumin' and humin' all day" (30). In capturing these hard and oppressive moments in the life of black people in America, Baraka aims at exposing the ills of slavery, slave trade, and the evil of an overbearing system that has no regard for the dignity of the Blacks. Incidentally, Amiri Baraka is not alone in the endeavor of the recreation of history. A sizeable number of African-American writers tap from the pool of history in order to better argue for the black race. Lorraine Hansberry in *A Raisin in the Sun* does not trifle when articulating the trauma of Blacks in America. In a loaded, free-flowing style, the playwright reviews the question of race relations and appropriately dramatizes the history of struggle by the Blacks to get along with the Whites. Every attempt to integrate the "white only" neighborhood meets with stiff resistance from the white people who even offer to pay the blacks so they stay off white areas. Lori-Park's play *Top Dog, Under Dog* equally recasts history in a dramatic piece that restricts action and leaves dramatic evolution around the personalities of two brothers living in permanent captivity. Ed Bullins in *Arm Yourself or Harm Yourself*, simply brings to the fore the popular historical phenomenon of violence perpetuated by Whites against the Blacks. The playwright, therefore, recommends arms possession for the Blacks as a source of their security.

The same urge and drive to unearth the past, draw lessons from it and shape the future motivates Bate Besong to act as the literary guard dog of the Anglophones in Cameroon. As such, he immerses and steeps his art, like Amiri Baraka, within the facts of history. Like his African-American counterpart, the Anglophone Cameroonian playwright dramatizes the

scaffold of history, which he considers the background cause of the second-class citizenship status reserved for the Anglophones. Bate Besong employs the resources of history and mythopoeia to project, debate or argue for the acknowledgment of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. In his maiden dramaturgical venture entitled *The Most Cruel Death of the talkative Zombie* hereafter referred to simply as *Zombie*, Besong, without respite, indicts all aspects of the historical formations; dates, places, events and even persons, which he condemns as culpable agents in the conspiracy of greed and betrayals that stare the Anglophones in the face today.

Unlike Baraka's *Dutchman*, which recounts a logically plotted story in the subway train station, Besong's *Zombie* does not tell a straight story. Rather the play unfolds as an episodic assessment of victimhood in the life of those who people a land of the Anglophone. In his erratic account, Bate Besong projects two principal characters – Baba Toura and Badjidka in a representative platform where Baba Toura stands for Francophone or French-speaking Cameroonian majority on the one hand, and the Badjidka Anglophone minority, on the other. The general conception held among English-speaking Cameroonians that they are accorded step-child treatment and often regarded as second-class citizens is the major focus of this play. The tragicomic show enacted by the duo thus culminates in what Ambanasom has described as “snippets of historical facts, places, and personalities in connection with the history of Cameroon” (1994:95). In keeping with the empiricist tradition, Ambanasom summarizes in his *Education of the Deprived*, that:

The facts are not recounted in any chronological order; but rather emerge out of wide-ranging and sometimes disjointed dialogue, speeches, songs and comments. They include places like Foumban, Mantoum, Tchollire and concepts like plebiscite, referendum, reunification, and integration. They comprise dead revolutionaries like Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandie, Felix Roland Moumie: they consist of well-meaning but dead Anglophone heroes like S.A. George, A.N. Jua, P.M. Kale and Z.A. Abendong. (1994:96 – 97)

In the play therefore the ensuing action and interaction, the relationship between the actors smacks of a master-servant relation, an arrangement that disfavors Badjidka the Anglophone. Reduced to a stooge and a slave, Badjidka receives orders from his master, Baba Toura who manipulates and ruthlessly abuses his subordinates with total impunity. In their childlike and childish display, these protagonists confess their deeds and misdeeds on their victims, the masses that do not get a chance to confront their oppressors. Through flashback, flash-forward and complex juxtaposition of time past,

present and the future, the playwright collapses the time, making allusion to historical events and political concepts. Equally poignant is the mention of the names and description of important figures and personalities that matter to the Anglophones in Cameroon. Bate Besong's mention of political concepts like Plebiscite and Referendum, and a place like Foumban, which is the historical town where the reunification pact was drawn up simply carries the same weight and meaning like Amiri Baraka's mention of plantation, slave, wire, and nigger, in *Dutchman*. Names like Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandie, Felix-Roland Moumie, among others (who represent the heroes of Cameroon's independence) are intended for a clear purpose – either praise or blame. In either discarding or hailing, the playwright walks down memory lane essentially to pull up evidence of either conspiracy or conformity, relative to the dreams of the Anglophones in Cameroon.

When Lula in Baraka's play tells Clay that "your grandfather was a slave, he did not go to Harvard" (18), the underlying aim by the author is to expose the ills and the irony of a system in a country that preaches liberty and equality and then practices the opposite. To African Americans, education was a wasteful venture. Clay's father could neither qualify for education nor gain any better employment other than that of a night watchman. This fact bears the needed testimony to the history of role distribution, a history that sanctions the permanent subjugation of black people. In a similar manner, Besong spotlights witnesses, the active forces that worked either in support or against the aspirations of the Anglophones in Cameroon. In the opening pages of *Zombie*, peepholes of history open through the perspectives of a prominent Anglophone leader. The identity of the prominent figure captures the details of his curriculum vitae. Through Badjidka, the following details reveal a crucial historical fact.

Badjidka: (*Justifying himself to the end*), How can one ex-school teacher, however wise he may be, decide against a majority decision of several Grade One Headmasters and B.A (inter) of KNDP as well as the mad hyenas of NdehNtumazah's Communist Upeciste-teleguided, ok? (4)

The details of the Curriculum Vitae above correspond to that of two historical figures of Muna and Foncha. Solomon Tandeng Muna, was the first West Cameroonian to be appointed speaker of the National Assembly following the reunification of the two Cameroons. The references that follow, point to the personality of John Ngu Foncha, a founding member of the United Cameroon. Foncha studied in St Charles Teachers Training College, Onitsha, Nigeria from where he obtained a Grade II Teachers Certificate. He was appointed Headmaster of St Joseph School (RCM) Mankon in 1948.

The KNDP referred to in the quotation is the political party “Kamerun National Democratic Party that Foncha founded in 1955 with A.N. Jua as its Secretary General. Both politicians formerly belonged to the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) under the leadership of E.M.L. Endeley. Nevertheless, they decamped when Endeley stopped advocating secession from Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon as they had originally agreed. Foncha and Augustine Ngom Jua, therefore, left and founded their own party through which they worked to achieve their original idea. In addition, Ndeh Ntumazah cited in the quote is equally an Anglophone activist who founded the “One Kamerun’ (OK) movement to fill the gap and vacuum that was left after Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) was banned from operating in Southern Cameroons in 1957.

In other instances, Bate Besong does not tax the reader/audience to decipher the political figures that he arraigns, he calls them by their names. The “dialogical monologue” between Baba Toura and Badjidka, recalls important figures and events of history:

Toura: With political enemies settled everywhere, our orders had to be harsh. There was Albert Ndongmo with his fetishes...and there were your own undying crop of antagonists – S. A. George, P.M. Kale, Motomby Woleta.

Badjidka: All ranged against one man, meeee.

Toura: I haven’t finished, Z.A. Abendong, Mr. Augustine Ngom Jua...

Badjidka: (*He suddenly comes to life – kneels before Toura*) I remember that one will never be able to repay the debt I owe you and that flat foot. Amichive slit his throat from chin to collarbone. (*Zombie*: 14)

The names and personalities cited were the active voices and critical minds that constituted the phalanx of assertive Anglophone leaders. Amichive, referred to is a onetime notorious high-handed and brutal National Security Delegate that was dreaded for extreme forms of torture and elimination of people successive regimes suspected had strong enough dissenting views to be threats. In the play, the relationship between Baba Toura and Badjidka, captures the master-servant, rich-poor and majority-minority equation that always disfavors the Anglophones represented by Badjidka. It is easy to spot out instances of admiration and regard that the playwright has for some historical figures. In obvious celebration of freedom fighters, Besong’s tone is unequivocal. Full of regrets, Toura questions:

Who was I to fight the great Ruben Mpodol Um Nyobe? Thanks to the betrayal of Mpodol by his lieutenant, it was quick for the colonial dogs who assassinated him to preserve their colony from

Communist influence. Who was I to give orders to the dogs... the dogs could have got any one. (15-16)

The playwright's concomitant respect for Um Nyobe and disgust for his traitors and the colonialists is undisguised. Equally undisguised is the reference to concepts like Plebiscite, Unification, Integration, and the events of May 20. Baba Toura does not mince words when he cautions:

It is time (*coughs*) to abandon the dialectical ambiguities of Bamenda Congress under the certain troublemaker, Jua; and embrace the only valid and effective ideology. I launch my book "Planned Unification and Equivalence under Benevolent Touralogy"...which means to suspend the congress proceedings until members regain their senses. (25)

These glimpses around the issue of unification later develop in the dialogue that ends the first part of the play. In their childish dumb show of playful, play/quarrel acts, Badjidka and Toura refer to very crucial political historical concepts.

Toura: You cold-blooded liar! (*Toura fraternises Badjidka, brings the "Big Book" of the referendum before Toura: Rising from his "Throne", they both sign the book of TOURA – UNIFICATION. (SILENCE)*)

Toura: Bring the insurrectionists to Centre Civique.

Badjidka: (*Over provincial radio*) They are a group that refused to salute the national flag on 20 May. They are cobras who refused to vote. (28)

The reflections around the high moments of history get to a point where Yaro Amichive makes a mockery of the Fouban Conference. He states in very lousy terms that, "Treaties with us are of no value... And after the promiscuous Fouban Congress, didn't we flush the pacts of unity into the toilets?" (48). By flushing the terms of Fouban agreement, Bate Besong intends on emphasizing the shameful practice of violating agreements and surreptitiously twisting laws to disfavor one of the parties in a deal. However, in continuation of his assessment of the culture of manipulation, Bate Besong turns to the popular issues of the UN sponsored plebiscite that many critics have perceived disdainfully as a political chicanery. To better dramatize this manipulation, Toura mocks:

Wisdom, conduct a United Nations organised plebiscite "labels" the polling booths – then stands back to guide and instruct the "voters". Do you prefer free speech open elections and government

by political party of your choice or – do you hold and this is what you must hold as infallible doctrine – a totalitarian state à la mode Stalin police rule and the supreme dictatorship of a he alone party. (64)

Effectively, the above excerpt is a deliberate twist and mockery of the infamous two alternatives that were open to the Anglophones during the plebiscite. Many critics and historians have argued that the plebiscite in question was a hoax, and that the Anglophones did not have much of a choice. That the questions were a manipulation premeditated to ensure Anglophone marginalization; a claim, which seems justified from the historical analysis and an examination of the circumstances that build up to the historic event. As a matter of fact, the problems faced by the Anglophones in Cameroon parallel the situation of African-Americans in the United States. In dramatizing these problems, playwrights from both settings establish a fine thread that links up their past with the present forces that grew out of historical manipulations. Consistent with their avowed objectives of exposing the evils of racial discrimination and colonialism, the African-American and the Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights design their plays with similar historical correlation.

In the discourse of historical moments that touch on the lives of African-Americans, the significant flashes in Baraka's *Dutchman* gain even further developments in his other plays, *The Slave*, *Slave Ship*, and *The Motion*, which very much bear the features of a sequel. If we agree with the history of naming and the established links between *Dutchman*, as a recall of Dutchman-of-war, then we will also agree that the title of his next play, *The Slave* is no oddity but in keeping with the logic of history. After all, those who got on board the Dutchman-of-war vessel became slaves. The playwright even qualifies the play in the subtitle as a "fable in a prologue and two acts". This subtitle is further justification of the historicity – a fable being a story or an account used to reinforce an existing truth, there is no doubt that Baraka sets out to exhume hard facts of history as the foundation of the present-day tribulations. The sequential accounts only add flesh to the insights evoked in *Dutchman*. Talking about sequels, Amiri Baraka does not seem to be the only one linking one dramatic piece and the other in a bid to further the understanding and evolution of a situation of oppression.

Bate Besong, also speaking for Anglophone Cameroonians, crafts a sequel to *Zombie*, which he entitles *Once Upon Great Lepers*. While Baraka's sequel to *Dutchman*, titled as *The Slave*, dramatizes the ordeal of three persons, caught in a labyrinth of racial complexity, Besong's sequel to *Zombie*, *Great Lepers*, revolves around two principal personalities that are hemmed in by the foibles of history. In Amiri Baraka's *The Slave*, Walker Vessel, the only Black in the trio is viewed as the ultimate purveyor of violence. When the

play opens, the prologue introduces an old field hand who appears alone on stage. This field slave serves as prologue for the action that follows in the play proper. The prologue warns:

Whatever I am or seem...to you; then let that rest. But figure still,
that you might not be right...you might be lying...to save yourself
or my self's image, which might set you crawling like a thirsty dog,
for the meanest of drying streams. (43)

Errol Hill in his *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*, intimates that the notion of deceit dominates the prologue. Accordingly, this deceit ranges from the hypocrisy of the Whites to the self-deceit with which men try to prevent the facts that “we are liars and we are murderers”. The field slave in the prologue metamorphoses and becomes Walker Vessel who features as a Black revolutionary from the battle, who stops to visit Grace, his former wife, kids, and her second husband, a white college professor called Brad Easley. His arrival at the home of his ex-wife coincides with violent eruptions outside the building.

As explosions rock the building and Walker Vessel drinks himself into a stupor, the three men debate on the kind of revolution that Walker has instigated and the sort of person he has become. Easley, Grace's husband, tries to kill Walker but instead Walker kills him. Therefore, unlike the drama of the *Dutchman* where the White woman kills the Black man, in *The Slave*, the reverse is true; the black man kills the white man, an act he poses as a way to ensure his own security. In yet another explosive attack on their apartment, Grace is mortally wounded. Dying, she pleads with Walker to save the children but he answers that “they are already dead” (88). Equally hurt in the explosion, Walker crawls, reverting at the end of the play to the posture of the field hand earlier seen in the prologue.

On the other hand, Bate Besong's *Great Lepers* maintains similar themes and techniques akin to those of *Zombie*. Nevertheless, as opposed to the structure of Amiri Baraka's *The Slave* that unfolds along a plane and plan of logical progression, *Great Lepers*, simply calls into sharp focus the same issues of plebiscite, referendum, reunification, and national integration. The episodic structure clearly deconstructs classical and traditional norms that characterize works outside of the modernist perspective. Most importantly, *Great Lepers* in its historicity digresses in other relevant areas of history, which revise names of people and places that contributed to the unique experiences of the Anglophones in Cameroon.

In honest respect and in fulfillment of the duty owed history, Bate Besong rewrites in *Great Lepers* the life experience of two un-identical twins, Samdeng Ngufor Akriye Moghamo and Ntufam Vikuma Egu Eku.

The two characters, both Anglophones represent the two English-speaking regions of Northwest and Southwest. Bate Besong's metaphor is even more loaded when analyzed against the geographical regions represented by the names of the two characters. Shadrack Ambanasom in his *Education of the Deprived* explains thus:

Ntufam Vikama Egu Eku is surely a name from the Anglophone Southwest Province. Vikuma, in 1960s and 1970s was an acronym whose three syllables stood for the coastal people from Victoria (Vi), Kumba (Ku), Mamfe (Ma), today known as SAWA, a much larger designation that includes coastal Francophones. (1994:139)

The understanding that Ntufam Vikuma is a collection of the initials of chief towns of the Southwest equally points to the historical importance of the account relative to the struggles of the Anglophones in Cameroon. On the other hand, Ambanasom continues by saying Samndeng Ngufor Akriye Moghamo is undoubtedly from the Northwest Province and more precisely from Momo Division. Actually, Samndeng could be a combination of Tandeng Muna and John Ngu Foncha, whose personality and identity is fused to obtain Samdeng Ngufor Akriye Moghamo. The historical importance of both the names of places and the late veteran politicians implied in the appellations, point to the crucial roles both of them played in the saga of the Anglophone Cameroon problem.

Synoptically *Great Lepers* oscillates around two major ideological positions represented by first class citizens on the one hand and tenth class citizens on the other. The first-class citizens, Francophones, represent the tyrants who have enslaved the tenth class, Anglophones, "who came as kings but are treated as slaves" (20). Due to this kind of situation, the Anglophones consider themselves trapped and held down by an oppressive system that seeks their complete elimination. In further demonstration of his utter dismay at the captivity of the historical formation, Samndeng comments:

You write urination and rude words on the wall regarding reunification (*In a sinister tone*) we are sending you the May 20th alabaster with her ashes (a pause) rather than have your teeth extracted, you prefer carrying a mouth full of rotten teeth. It is not exaggeration to say that bad breath harm many careers. I hope and pray that others will not dwell on your rotten teeth but what you are inside. (*Great Lepers*: 28)

In his reflection, Samndeng regrets the unification pact that only translated into total enslavement of the Anglophones. By way of summarizing

the salient moments of the history of their depersonalization, Samndeng adds sarcastically that:

You are drugged and dragged from the Fouban hole by the hair. Is C.F.A. the ticket to happy life? (pause) (*turning to Surgeon General Obenegou and giving him a sneering little smile*). May a leper inquire why a certain body should not end up like any other decomposing cadaver on reunification roadside? (28)

Bate Besong's disgust with the failures of the Fouban conference and the hastily arranged unification is undisguised. Irrked by the circumstances under which these "faux pas" of history placed the Anglophones, Bate Besong emphasizes that "the Anglophone writer of my generation is a writer in politics" (ALA Bulletin:96). Thus, in pursuit of truth and the fulfillment of his duty as conscience of society, the writer must utilize the resources of history to confront the present quagmire.

While Bate Besong's *Great Lepers* arraigns veteran politicians to contemplate their lot on the stage of national life, Amiri Baraka in *The Slave* projects on himself as a witness and victim of the race relations. The character and attitude of Walker Vessel who abandons his wife and two kids very much ties with the realistic fact about Amiri Baraka himself who abandoned his Jewish wife in late 1964 with two kids and switched from Black integrationist to anti-White and Black Nationalist advocate. The revolutionary vision seen in Walker is reminiscent of Baraka's revolutionary stance against White people whom he views as devils. In his ideological shift, Baraka endorses hatred of the white man. His fictional representative, Walker, confesses, "I was crying out against three hundred years of oppression" (72). This statement is very much re-echoed by Badjidka the stooge of *Zombie* who equally declares, "wise leader, we will control their destiny uninterrupted for 300 years" (*Zombie*: 49). Like Besong, Butake recreates and converts the trauma of history into palatable "fiction". In *Family Saga*, the playwright projects on the dialectical framework against which the Anglophone/Francophone dichotomies operate.

Actually, *Family Saga* is a dramatization of greed, theft, and shameless loot and rape of the resources of the fictive kingdom of Kamanda. On the literary level, Butake's play tells the story of half-brothers, Kamala and Kamalo, whose complex and controversial past shows that they are not real biological brothers and as such are not really related. However, because of a deed of unity between the two of them, Kamalo and Kamala make up the family of the kingdom that ostensibly reserves equality and social justice for all and sundry. Unfortunately, the practical and daily realities prove the reverse. Contrary to the expectations of family values, one of the brothers,

Kamalo, appoints himself master and overlord of their collective estate. In this new role, he gangs up and conspires with his Papa Fiekafhim, to subdue his brother. While Kamalo and his lone child Redone, lead a life of plenty and waste, Kamala and his progenies, Sawa and Ngong wallow in want, misery, and absolute poverty. To make matters worse, Kamalo transforms his brother and kids into bondsmen by subverting the original deed of brotherhood to one of bondage hood. Attempts by Kamala to seek the intervention of his own Papa, Baakingoom, fails. Beneath this literary stratum, Butake's play explores and exploits the facts of history that belie the Anglophone marginality in Cameroon. Kamalo represents the overbearing and oppressive force of the Francophone majority while Kamala stands for the ignored, neglected and depersonalized Anglophones who are denied access to the collective family wealth of Kamanda. Allegorically, the names and crucial rules of Yaman, Fiekafhim and Baakingoom represent the imperialistic forces of Germany, France and Britain whose mischievous interplay left regrettable pork marks that continue to affect Cameroon in general and the Anglophones in particular.

In a similar manner, Baraka's *The Motion of History* written in 1975-76 takes backward strides into the seventeenth century, tracing situations of oppression that culminated in rebellion in America. In the words of Tejumola Olaniyan, in *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance*, Baraka's play is a worthy recapitulation of Black oppression and an objective assessment of the evil of capitalism. More so, the critic explains that, "It is a vast, panoramic view of situations of oppression and rebellion in America from the seventeenth century to the present. It draws generously on history and there is an appendix of some of those sources". (1995: 88). In revisiting and recalling the nation's history through recurrent rebellion, Baraka sets out to expose the treachery, shameful separation and discrimination enforced between Blacks and Whites. In his new vision and ideological conviction, the playwright focuses on both Black and White workers exploited by the same enemy. The play thus represents the 1676 rebellion as an interracial revolt against servitude. In recalling and recapturing the rebellions that took place generations ago, Baraka identifies freedom fighters and Civil Rights leaders who perished sacrificing their lives to win pride and dignity for Blacks in America. These include great figures like Carmichael, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Kwame Nkrumah, Muhammad Elijah and Nat Turner. As if to say these great historical figures did not work solely as individuals, Baraka's *The Motion* also enlists committed movements and pressure groups under which Black movement was coordinated.

This second aspect of historical recuperation includes groups like The Black Panther Movement BPM, Nation of Islam NOI, NAACP, Ku klux Klan KKK, Student Non-violent Coordination Committee (SNCC), and

the sit-in movements. As a historical realist, Baraka highlights the literary version of historical figures, events, and movements. For example, in a rally organized by Rev. Small to educate the Blacks on the need to register and vote, Student, a participant at the rally, argues that:

This voting Rev. I'm for it. We are backing it up all the way, some of us came all the way from Jackson to help out. I mean I think it is our right to vote, to sit on the bus, go into the stores and restaurants, anything we want. But it's got to go deeper Rev. we talked about getting some real control over our lives. (30)

The above quote is an artistic replay of part of the civil rights movement through which Black people attempted to regain their lost humanity. This movement in American history was not without White resistance. The Jim Crow Laws that were designed to foster Black marginalization and concurrently enhance White superiority had its major supporters and promoters like the KKK, which Baraka simply refers to as "Klan's men", and the NAAWP. At the behest of Governor Grantham, Black people are tortured and ruthlessly killed. Like the historical racist Governor Wallace of Mississippi, Baraka's Governor Grantham manifests his loathe for the Blacks by his racist projection, "I say import more Blacks, and relieve all the Whites from debtors servitude... then use the Whites to enslave the Blacks, use the Whites to be the overseers, the guards, the gendarmes for the Blacks" (57).

Largely, the racist attitude of Governor Grantham is a direct shadow reflection of Governor Wallace of Mississippi who deployed great energy and force only to secure judicial tools with which to protect Jim Crow Laws. His disdain for the Blacks led him further to introduce a bill repealing all penalties imposed on White servants who plundered and looted during the Bacon's rebellion. He specified:

The language of the act will implicitly exclude from this benefit any of the Blacks, whether freedmen or limited term bond servants, so that all the Blacks will be liable, the Whites freed. We will bust up the linkages our errors have created. We will right the wrong. (57)

In essence, *The Motion* gravitates through strikes, rebellions, pressure groups, and movements that culminate into the foundation of the "antirevisionist Marxist-Leninist vanguard party". Baraka's character, Juanita, one of the initiators of the idea of collective activism explains:

The new communist party is guided by the science of revolution, Marxism, Leninism – Mao-Tse-Tung thought, the best of all possible weapons for liberation of the people from the clutches of the bloody beast-imperialism, monopoly, capitalism ... The party must be an instrument for bringing about the dictatorship of the proletariat ... that is the absolute domination by the workers of the production process and political life of this country. (*The Motion* 121 – 122)

The build up to the idea of the new party is Baraka's latest ideological shift that led him to the conviction that "Both Blacks and Whites suffered the same oppression." Therefore, to solve the problem, to find a sustainable solution to the problems of America, both Blacks and Whites must pool their energies and resources together. Interestingly, the path leading to that unified and united struggle against imperial capitalism starts in *Dutchman* and continues in *Slave Ship: A Historical Pageant*. Through its title and especially the subtitle, the play enunciates its historical framework emphasizing the fact that it is a recapture of the historical moments and unlike the other two, attempts a vivid representation of the horrors and the horrifying experiences of the Blacks during their capture and forceful deportation to the New World. Unlike the other three, *Dutchman*, *The Slave* and *The Motion* which have a well-coordinated plot, *Slave Ship* unfolds through a series of tableaux and scenes that are juxtaposed with drumming, singing and dancing in the mist of cries, groans, and screams. The schematic trajectory that is marked by recognizable transitional moments inevitably leads to the Americanization of Africans. To properly represent the ills of the inhuman experience and thus beg for a redress, Amiri Baraka splits the picture into three main blocs. The first bloc deals with the capture of free Africans instantly transformed into slaves. This capture leads to a split in family ties and disruption of genealogy, cultural alienation, and complete depersonalization. The second bloc deals with the experience on board the slave ship, the degrading and substandard conditions under which the slaves are held and transported; chains, filth, moans, cries, screams, suicides and death are a familiar scenario. In some extreme cases, Baraka even projects on women killing their own children just to save them the trouble and bondage of slavery. The third tableau of "picturization" focuses on slave labor, struggles, and revolts in the field and plantations. In painting this scenario of hard labor, Baraka tacitly alludes to the shameful reality that the same hands that toiled day and night under sunshine and rain in the construction of American society, have been denied their rights of full citizenship.

Regarding the question of rights, Bate Besong in his other play *The Banquet*, highlights in a cinematographic manner the ills of a neocolonial society,

Erouncam, bedeviled by internal cleavages that render peaceful coexistence impossible. Among other things, the play harps on the relationship between the Francophone majority and the Anglophone minority. Characteristically, Besong once again walks down memory lane of history and critically dissects the political, social, and the constitutional difference between Virgin Erooncam and Wild Erouncam. In this drama, Virgin Erooncam stands for Southern Cameroons and Wild Erouncam represents the East Cameroon / Francophone Cameroun. Continuous oppression of Virgin Erooncam by the dictatorial and manipulative forces of Wild Erouncam inevitably leads to a strike, a revolution which is masterminded from across the wall; the Mungo. The revolutionaries take Nouayed by storm that unleashes verbal lashes, innuendos, and outright attack on the neocolonial authority of Francefraud.

As if to examine the harmony and peace that reigned among Anglophones prior to their union with Wild Erouncam, Bate Besong's *The Banquet* projects on the discrepancy, and harmonious relationship between Virgin Erooncam and Reginia, prior to the union between Virgin Erooncam and Wild Erouncam. In the prologue, Premier draws a comparison as follows:

The association of Virgin Erooncam with Reginia has been to the best interest of Virgin Erooncam. The Territory has advanced from a province in the Eastern Region of Reginia to full Self-governing Region with a separate House of Assembly, government and premier (...). If we remain with Reginia, we have a right to appeal to the Federal Supreme Court in Zago and there to the Privy Council in Donlop which hears appeals from all Commonwealth countries. This system ensures that every case is given a fair trial. (153-154)

In the above reflections, Premier recounts a well-known historical fact meant to justify Anglophone Cameroon petition for a return to the pre-1961 era. After a recollection of the advantages of a respectable, justice-oriented and comprehensive union with Reginia, Bate Besong's Premier examines the disadvantages of the present disposition, Union between Virgin Erooncam with Wild Erouncam. He lashes out:

Union with Wild Erouncam means that your children will grow up in servitude. Union with Wild Erouncam means that there will be permanent state of emergencies...under the Prance-Fraudian System, you cannot have fair trial. Anyone accused of an offence in Wild Erouncam Republic is manhandled and flogged and is generally treated as a guilty criminal. Even the most junior gendarme there seems to have power of "life and death" over the common people. This is a bad system. (155)

A thin line of intersection links the two pageants, one by Amiri Baraka with the main title *Slave Ship* and the other by Bate Besong, with the main title *The Banquet*. The relationship between Besong's virgin Erooncam and Reginia is reminiscent of peace and harmony that the victims of *Slave Ship* enjoyed prior to boarding.

The euphoria of dance, singing, and drumming simply constitutes the final struggle of a race in transition. By dancing in the midst and under the chains of the imperialists and looters, Baraka's victims simply try to demonstrate the virtues of their communal lifestyle, something they will forever miss while in their new location of the New World. However, the pressure of dictatorship, neocolonial manipulation and an overpowering force of oppression, urge the subjected people to rise up and fight for their rights. In some strange circumstances like in *Slave Ship*, desperately hungry slaves betray the strike action and struggles planned against the forces of oppression. Nevertheless, this is hardly the case in Besong's *The Banquet*, in which a consensual decision and well-coordinated action is taken for the complete overthrow of the endemic oppressive system. In a continuous effort to complete the picture of the practical, social, and political differences between Reginia and Wild Erooncam, Premier is categorical:

In Virgin Erooncam and Reginia, political differences are settled by arguments and by the ballot box. In Wild Erooncam, political differences are settled by the hydrogen: bomb and poison... if you vote for Wild Erooncam Republic, you will forever fail to secure independence for Virgin Erooncam because Wild Erooncam Republic is and will forever remain a colony of France-Fraud. Prance-Fraudian troops are still settled in Nouayed and Adoula. (*Three Plays*, 156)

From the point of view of Premier, Wild Erooncam is complete evil, its dubiousness and highly suspicious dealings with the vulnerable minorities spell out the undue advantage that history allows the oppressive forces. In racially structured societies, the black race continues to be the prey and victim of the White supremacist syndrome. This phenomenal practice challenges the Black artists in a special way

As if to further project on Baraka's historical recourse, objective representation and artistic truth, Francis Kearns in *Black Identity*, recounts historical events and incidences that are very much akin to the content of Baraka's drama. Kearns's report of an eyewitness account states:

The Mayflower's nameless sister ship, presumably a Dutch vessel which stole into the harbour of Jamestown in 1619 and unloaded

her human cargo of 20 of us was but the first such ship to touch the shores of the New World and her arrival signalled what was to be our trial for centuries to come. (1970:17)

It can be deduced that the Mayflower's nameless sister ship in the above quotation becomes Baraka's *Slave Ship*. The Dutch vessel becomes *Dutchman*. In the stage direction of *Slave Ship*, Baraka captures the ambiance at the dock, prior to take off as follows:

The whole theatre in darkness, dark for a long time – just dark. Occasional sound like ship groaning, squeaking, rocking, sea smells. In the dark... gradually the odours of the sea and the sounds of the sea and sounds of the ship, creep – Burn incense, ...pee, Shit Death life process going on anyway. These smells and cries; the slash and tear of the lash... (251-252)

When all is set, the ship is ready to depart with its victims, Baraka guides his audience through minimal dialogue to experience an anonymous voice and its instructions:

Voice 1: Ok. Let's go! A good cargo of black gold. Let's go! We head West. We head west (*long laughter*) Black gold in the West. We got our full cargo.

Voice 2: Aye, Aye, Cap'in, we're on our way. Riches be ours, by God.

Voice 1: Aye riches, riches be ours, we're on our way. America (*laughter*) (252.)

Baraka identifies the consignment of slaves as bound for America, the New World. It is here that their new life will start. They bid farewell to harmonious, festive, and communal livelihood. To demonstrate their regrets of losing their sweet fatherland, Baraka details out on women praying and invoking the gods for assistance.

Woman 1: OooohObatala!

Woman 2: Shango.

Woman 1: OoooObatala. (*Children crying in the cold and women trying to comfort them, trying to keep their sanity, too*)

Woman 3: Moshake, chile, calm, calm, be you, moshake, chile, o calm, orisha, save us.

Woman 2: AAAA. EEEE

Woman 1: Quiet woman be quiet.

Woman 3: Moshake, baby, chile be calm, be calm, it give you....

Woman 1: Shango, Obatala, make your lightening beat the inside bright with paths for your people, Beat, Beat, Beat. (*Drums. Come up, but they are walls and floors, being beaten. Chains rattled; chains rattled, Drag the chains. We let the feeling of many people jammed together men, women, children, aching in the darkness. The whips magnify the chains and whips. The dragging together. The pain, terror, women begin to moan and chant songs "African Sorrow Song" with scraping of floor and chains for accompaniment*). (252)

The general atmosphere in *Slave Ship* is one of moans, grunts, cries, pain, but also that of song, dance, orchestration and rattling. Francis Kearn lends credence to Baraka's fictional reality when an eyewitness confirms that during the historical moment:

...more than (4,000,000 of us were brought to America alone. For every 100 of us who survived the terrible journey across the Atlantic, the so-called "middle passage" of these voyages, 400 of us perished). During three hundred years – the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries – more than 100,000,000 of us were torn from our African home. (1970: 97)

No further proof is needed to consolidate Baraka's position as a historical realist. The events he describes and paints in *Slave Ship* parallel those of *The Motion of History*, which employs a similar approach of history to justify Black rage. It is truly in order to understand the past and then use it to redress contemporary tribulations that writers and critics of the minority predicate their art against the historical formation. This strategy allows the artists to correctly target and refocus their art in line with the dreams and aspirations of the people

In most of his plays, Baraka constructs and replays the hard evidence of the cruelties of history on the Blacks in America. A collection of the insightful flashes tailored along their proper contexts tells the story of the ordeal of Black people in the new world. In the following excerpt, Baraka dramatizes the horror and traumatizing situations of the captives:

Man 3: Devils, Devils, Devils, White Beasts, shit eaters, Beasts. (*They Beat the walls and try to tear the chains out of the walls*). White shit eaters.

Woman 3: Aicceeee

Man 1: God, she's killed herself and the child. Oh, God. Oh God. (*Moans, moans, soft drums and the constant, now almost humming, hummingbmbmbmbmbmbmmnnnn*).

Woman: 1: She strangled herself with the chain. Choked the child. Oh

Sango, Help us Lord. Oh. Please.

Woman 2: Why you leave us, Lord?

Man 1: Dademi, Dademi...she dead –Dademi, (*Hear man wraked with death cries*) (sic) Dademi-Dademi. (*Slave Ship* 253-254)

The foregoing excerpt is a direct replica of actual historical account that reports on the ills and harrowing experiences of the captives.

In *Slave Ship* and *The Motion*, reference is made to Reverend Turner as the coup plotter and brain behind the planned uprising. Characteristically, this reference qualifies as a peep or a flash of history referring to the historical and epic figure, Prophet Nat Turner, whose sole efforts immensely contributed to the eventual end of slavery. Lerone Bennett, Jr., in her historical document, *Before the Mayflower*, offers insights into the birth, growth and activism of Baraka's hero, Nat Turner. The man, popularly called Prophet was born in 1800, the same year Gabriel Prosser died. His mother, a born African slave, dreaded the idea of bringing forth a child who would grow into slavery. Lerone Bennett adds, "She was so wild that she had to be tied to prevent her from murdering him. The son survived and demonstrated his hatred of slavery in his own way" (1962:134). This boy, Nat Turner grew up, became a preacher and an active freedom fighter. "A mystic with blood on his mind, a preacher with vengeance on his lips, a dreamer, a visionary, a revolutionary, Nat Turner was a fantastic mixture of gentleness, ruthlessness and piety" (1962:135).

History records and recounts how the prophet Turner organized and planned a slave uprising that led to the execution of hundreds of slaveholders and slave conspirators. He was later to confess, "It was my object to carry terror and devastation wherever we went" (137). Prophet Nat Turner was caught, tried, and executed at the age of 30 years. On November 11, 1831, "the prophet dangled from the end of a rope in a town called Jerusalem" (139). His comparatively short life on this planet left immense impact on the platform of liberation, especially for the slaves. It is this figure that Baraka, as a historical realist, brandishes as an altruist and faithful servant of the Blacks in America. In continuation of the history of African-American Drama, Baraka's *The Motion* replays the different contributions by historic figures like Dr. King, Malcolm X, and Elija Mohammed. In this polyphony of voices, Baraka concurrently highlights ideological correlation and conflicting approaches deployed in the service of civil rights for Blacks. This is exemplified through the speeches of Malcolm and Dr. King in the play. In an apparent attack on Martin Luther's non-violence approach, Malcolm is uncompromising when he warns:

Any Black leader preaching non-violence is disarming Black people, is doing Black people a disservice. In the face of the violence inflicted on us by White brutality, teaching non-violence is a crime. Let whoever is teaching non-violence, preach it to the Whites and let them accept it first and then we will be non-violent. (*The Motion*: 84)

This accusation naturally elicits a response from Dr. King who argues that:

We have to see that we are fighting something bigger than just those poor, ignorant municipal government officials of Memphis. We are fighting the same people who are crushing our brothers and sisters in South Africa. If we talk about peace and non-violence, then as some of our critics have said, we need to ask the government to be peaceful and non-violent. And in marching for your demands, though we have always favored non-violence, we know you still got to show these people you mean to get equality, to get justice, to get your full due under the law. (Ibid: 94)

The above controversial positions regarding the approach to Black struggle is a summary of the debate and debacle that reigned between the historical Malcolm and Dr. King. These accounts and references represent active historical pressures that the Blacks in America organized in search of freedom and liberty.

On the Anglophone platform, the same historical manipulation urged Bate Besong, to lament, “We came as kings and were treated like slaves” (*Zombie*: 25). This claim very much tells of the atmosphere at the Fouban Conference where the different parties participated as autonomous states with great potentials. Unfortunately, the decisions were violated such that those who Besong refers to as kings, i.e. the Southern Cameroonians became slaves in the union. This situation is an echo of the history of African-Americans – some of whom came as kings but, all of whom are regarded as second-class citizens in a country they consider their own. In Cameroon, lots of historical facts and details come across in the art of the Anglophone. For example, in several instances, the permanent resurgence of issues of integration, Biafra, secessionists, plebiscite, Referendum of 20th May, Reunification, Fouban Conference, Fouban treaties, among other historical names of people and places conjure detailed historical accounts about which they feel hurt. Even names of persons like Ruben Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandie, and Felix-Roland Moumie, are in acknowledgment of their primordial contributions to freedom and social justice for the global Cameroon.

The allusion to such concepts as plebiscite and referendum pertains to

the political struggles around the 60s by Anglophones. The history of the Anglophone in Cameroon projects on the United Nations sponsored plebiscite that was organised in February 1961 to enable the people of Southern Cameroons to decide on the future of their country. The background accounts to the events show that the Southern Cameroonian politicians were unable to agree on a consensus so the U.N. thought it wise to make the people decide through a plebiscite which many people saw as a clear manipulation. The third option, the question of self-rule, was absent. As for those who voted, Julius Ngoh remarks that there was a misconception. In his view, some of the electorate erroneously thought the 1960 local administrative reforms had separated them from Northern Nigeria; which is why there were surprisingly a large number of votes in favour of the union with Nigeria (1987; 224). However, the basic argument advanced in the present dispensation is different. Due to the failure of the respect of the autonomy and to the marginalization, Anglophones repeatedly cried foul, their fundamental point of departure being that:

TODAY NO GROUP OF PEOPLE who freely chooses to join a political union would want to be treated as a captive people. In 1961, the people of Southern Cameroons, through a United Nation's plebiscite decided to enter a political union with the people of La République du Cameroun, whom they considered as their brothers and fellow countrymen... Their aspiration was to establish a unique federation on the continent of Africa and to evolve a bicultural society in which the distinct heritage of each of the partners to the union would flourish. (The Buea Declaration: 3)

The non-respect of the avowed aspirations makes the Anglophones feel cheated in the union. Meanwhile, the concept of Referendum and the date of 20th May, a familiar leitmotif in Besong's works equally relate to the same feeling of manipulation of the Anglophones. Following the plebiscite results, a federal system was established on 1 October 1961. Under this system, the Southern Cameroons, now West Cameroon, had a degree of autonomy which was, however, short-lived. Ahidjo, the Head of State argued that the Federal System was too expensive for a young country like Cameroon. In addition, the President explained that to consolidate national unity and integration, a unitary State was a better option.

To realize his dream, Ahidjo organized a Referendum in 1972, which resulted in the establishment of both the unitary constitution and the Unitary State on 20th May 1972. In a critical historical text titled *Ordinary Level History for Cameroon*, Mangula L. Tazanu et al., express regrets that the establishment of the Unitary State ushered unfavorable political, social

and economic changes for the former Southern Cameroons. They explain:

The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the great agro-industrial giant of West Cameroon, declined in importance. Former West Cameroon projects were now managed by Francophones who ruined most of them. The Victoria Natural Harbour and the Tiko Wharf were neglected as great attention was focused on the Douala Seaport. Former West Cameroon was literally forgotten in terms of road construction. The Yoke Dam in the neighbourhood of Muyuka was closed down in preference to the Edea Power Station. (117)

This catalogue of failures resulting from the absence of the will to maintain any economic or sociopolitical structure necessary for the improvement of former West Cameroon fundamentally pushed Anglophone activists to start questioning the *raison d'être* of the Unitary State. Like many critics, Besong castigates 20th May referendum as a hoax. John Ngu Foncha is more analytical in his scathing dismissal of such a manipulative tendency by Ahidjo. In his “Statement of Withdrawal of the Honourable Dr. John Ngu Foncha from the Constitutional Consultative Committee” he writes:

The Unitary State was no more justifiable in 1972 than it had been in 1961. Its introduction was the culmination of a process of annexation of Southern Cameroons by La République du Cameroun that began almost as soon as unification had been achieved and against which many individual and collective voices were raised among the leaders and people of Southern Cameroons. (3)

It is thus against the background of these complex historical facts that Bate Besong repeatedly alludes to such political concepts and events as if to emphasize the indictment of history for its role in the life of the Anglophones in Cameroon.

Analogous to the above, is the ever-present reference to Founban Conference. In Besong's *The Banquet* and *Zombie*, Founban or the Conference and its outcome are often referred to in such mockery as “the Conference held in a town of a two-headed Marmoun,” “the promiscuous Founban Baazar,” and “Balancoire of the Founban Ideological Corvee” Factually, the Founban Conference of 17-21 July, 1961 came on the heels of the Bamenda Conference of 26-28 of June 1961 and was aimed at bringing together representatives of Southern Cameroons and La République du Cameroun to work out a constitution for a Reunified Cameroon. It was also aimed at establishing power-sharing within a federal system and the setting up of an educational system for the new state. Ahidjo of La République and Foncha

of Southern Cameroons led the delegations on both sides. The resolutions arrived at among other prescriptions stipulated as follows:

The State was to be known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The Republic was to be headed by a President, assisted by a Vice-President. Regional Assemblies were to be established – for East and West Cameroons.

National motto was to be peace-work-fatherland. English and French were to be the official languages. (107- 109)

The decisions established the Federal Constitution which took effect on October 1, 1961, the date the Federal Republic was born (Mangula L.T: 107-109).

Generally, the decisions arrived at in Foumban did not favor the Southern Cameroons. For example, no effective mechanism was set up to check against majority French domination. In addition, the issue of power-sharing was not appropriately defined. Little doubt then, that, the violations of major decisions resulted in Anglophone protest and radical activism. In fact, the idea of employing the resources of history in order to authenticate or prove present-day crises has become a popular approach among minority writers and critics of societies that have endemic problems. Butake in *Family Saga*, Victor Epie Ngome in *What God Has Put Asunder*, like Richard Wright and Susan Lori Parks of African-American platform, all explore similar resources to unearth and expose the contradictions of social and historical experiences. They all agree that history offers a pathway as endorsed by Antonio Gramsci's very instructive thought quoted in Forgacs David et al, that:

Every individual, including the artist and all his activities, cannot be thought of apart from society, a specific society. Hence, the artist does not write or paint just for his own precondition to be able to relive the moment of creation. He is an artist only in so far as he externalizes, objectifies and historicizes his phantasms. Every artist is historical or social to a lesser or greater degree. (1991: 112)

The implication of the link between theater-drama and social reality is that drama enables latent conflicts and overt dissensions to be uncovered. No doubt, Patrice Pavis refers to the text of drama as a document deriving from a hidden social reality. He uses the image of an iceberg to demonstrate the link between the theatrical text and social reality from which the text emanates and to which it relates. The visible tip of the iceberg is the text itself. The two concealed parts below water level are the "layers" of its

intertextual relationships with other texts and below them the ideology at the base of the iceberg. (*The Sociology of the Theatre* 16)

In conclusion, it is fair to restate that Baraka and Besong, like other minority writers recognize as well as employ the resources of history to replay the drama of victimhood among blacks in the United States of America and the Anglophones in Cameroon. In other words, Baraka and Besong recommend a look back through the paths of history as the only worthwhile endeavor with any potentials and promises of a sustainable resolution of present day tribulations among peoples and societies. Convinced that history and historical analyses hold the key not only to the understanding but also to the solution as already stated, these minority playwrights, poets and critics are unanimous about the role of the past in present-day realities. Otherwise put, literature, history and culture constitute the signposts of societal outfits that both proscribe and resist any possible separation. Even across vast geographical and geopolitical settings, the truism about the binary operational focus of history and literature is upheld and enhanced as a fact of sociopolitical, economic and social existence.

Works Cited

Primary Works

- Baraka, Imamu Amiri (LeRoi Jones). "Junkies are full of Shit" *Black Drama Anthology*. Woodie King and Ron Milner. eds. New York: New American Library, 1972.
- . *The Motion of History and Other Plays*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1978
- . "Slave Ship: A Historical Pageant" *Crosswinds: An Anthology of Black Dramatist in the Diaspora*. William B. Branch ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, 250-259.
- Jones, LeRoi. *Dutchman And The Slave: Two Plays*. New York: Morrow Quill Paper Backs, 1964.
- . *Four Black Revolutionary Plays*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.
- Besong, Bate. *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*. Limbe: Nooremac Press, 1986.
- . *The Banquet*. Makurdi: Edition Ehi, 1994.
- . *Three Plays*. Yaounde: Edition Clé, 2003.

Secondary Works

- Ambanasom, Shadrack A. *Pedagogy of the Deprived: A Study of Five Anglophone Cameroonian Plays*. Bamenda: Unique Printers, 1994.
- Baraka, I. Amiri. *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka*. New York:

- Freundlich Books, 1984.
- Bennett, Lerone. *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. USA: Feenguin Books Inc., 1962.
- Butake, Bole. *Lake God and Other Plays*. Yaounde: Edition, Clé 1999.
- . *Family Saga*. Yaounde: Edition Clé.2006.
- DiYanni, Robert. *Drama: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2000.
- Forgacs, David and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith eds., *Antonio Gramsci: Selection From Cultural Writings*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1991.
- Guerin L. Wilfred. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford U P, 1982.
- Hill, Errol ed., *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1987.
- Kearns E. Francis. *Black Identity: A Thematic Reader*. New York: Holt, Reinhart And Winston, 1970.
- Ngoh, Victor Julius. *Cameroon 1884–1985: A Hundred Years of History*. Limbe: Navi Group Publication, 1987.
- Ngome, Epie. *What God Has Put Asunder*. Yaounde: Pitcher, 1992.
- Olaniyan, Tejumola. *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance*. Oxford, New York: Oxford U P, 1995.
- Parks, Suzan-Lori. *The American Play and Other Works*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001.

CHAPTER 3

The Adaptation of History for Revolutionary Motifs in Femi Osofisan's Plays

Onwukah Benjamin Orji-Mba

The African playwright constantly draws upon the people's common history as a way of interrogating the contemporary realities of African society. To understand the present, the past has to be revisited with the intention of redressing it. The African playwright's strategy for bringing change to society is to mobilize the people by conscientizing them through the resources of history. This is because historical consciousness awakens people to the realities of their plight as they take a decision on what to do with the issues of history presented to them through creative imagination. As Bakary Traore puts it, "history can be used to back up plays about contemporary situations. Historical plays can 'awaken the enthusiasm of the audience and enlist their interest, provided they express current aspirations'" (1972:115). Most African literary artists, especially playwrights, have successfully experimented with the incorporation of oral literary materials into their written works. This trend has continued to gain acceptability, especially among African playwrights. Abiola Irele explains that:

Because the traditional culture has been able to maintain itself as a contemporary reality and thus to offer itself as a living resource, the modern literature strives to establish and strengthen its connection with a legacy that, though associated with the past, remains available as a constant reference for the African imagination. (2009: 78)

Olufemi Dunmade concurs with this assertion by underscoring that the transformation of modern Africa from an oral to a literate culture has necessitated the interpretation by African writers of the present using the oral traditions (1999: 250). Femi Osofisan, a Nigerian playwright, has constantly drawn attention to the widening gap between the leaders and the led in Africa. In doing this, he adopts a dramatic style that thrives on violating

mythological, artistic and social rules in order to reflect the imbalance in society. For instance, his use of myth and oral history is not so much to eulogize or support existing structure, as it is to subvert and recreate it to suit his ideological vision. In this way, he subscribes to the Brechtian theatrical rules of using a people's history to awaken and conscientize them. The subversion of myth, legend and history by the playwright is to release the masses from the grip of sustained religious and historical superstition with which they have been held captive by their elite (Orji-Mba 2014: 18).

Osofisan's artistic tendency is to use, as handmaiden, ancient traditional and religious practices of the Yoruba history and culture to uncover the exploitative and oppressive nature of the institutions. His infusion of the ancient folkloric heritage of ancient into his plays is not to perpetuate them in the present society but to expose and undermine them. He twists myth, history, and ritual in order to show that they are subjugating superstitions that have been used to imprison the common people in society overtime. Benedict Ibitokun explains this succinctly when he writes that Osofisan's dramatic style:

punctures the myth of respect for local deities to whom the traditional black man has subordinated himself. It also inaugurates the era of self-awareness whereby man understands religious myths as a self-reflection of his own psychic fragmentation or fright at some mysterious cosmic phenomena. (1995:84)

Femi Osofisan's plays portray the playwright's aversion to myths that subordinate the masses to the whims and avarice of their corrupt leaders; hence, he reconstructs them. He says of his dramatic style: "Obviously, I may use myth or ritual but only from a subversive perspective. I borrow ancient forms specifically to unmask them, to use theatrical magic to undermine the magic of superstition" (Gbilekaa 1997:77). All the corrupt and oppressive institutions of the traditional, oral society are usually exposed for public opprobrium in his plays. The playwright draws from the people's oral history to rage against the tyranny of the few against the masses.

Femi Osofisan's historical plays are constructed using Yoruba historical facts which are subverted in order to create awareness among his African audience so that they can interrogate their past in order to salvage the present as well as invent the future.

Theoretical Framework

New-Historicism is employed in this reading of the selected plays of Femi Osofisan. According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham,

New-Historicism involves the interrogation of a literary text “within the totality of the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes” (2009:219). The end result of such a critical perspective is that “these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm, and propagate the complex power structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society” (2009:219). In adopting New-Historicism in the reading of a text, the critic has to identify the historical context in which the work is set and study how the interplay of the social, political and cultural factors have produced the text, and how the text has in return reflected the society that produced it. This mode of reading rejects the isolation of a text from the social and ideological phenomena that shaped it. Instead, it “saw the literary text not as somehow unique but as a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses – religious, political, economic, aesthetic – which both shaped it and, in their turn, were shaped by it” (M. A. R. Habib 2005:761). This is against the structuralists’ view that literary works be discussed in isolation of the society that produced them, outside of any extraneous material.

The incorporation of history in literary works as a mark of true realism and the reflection of the truth of human experience in particular historical contexts has been acknowledged by several critics (E. Oko 1986, Sule Egya and Ismail Bala 2010, Samuel Asein 1978). The adoption of the New-Historicist critical perspectives enables the reader to examine the religious, political and economic discourses that belie Femi Osofisan’s historical plays. In the plays, the reader finds the historical forces that shape the playwright’s angst against the religious and political phenomena that suppressed the African society and which still threaten its developmental strides.

Ola Rotimi, in presenting the functionality of the application of history in dramatic literature, states: “When you immerse historical facts in the liquid of imagination and heat the crucible, the distillation of this mixture which collects at the other end of the creative receptacle is what I call historical. That truth can be described as a statement potent with contemporary applicability in a human context” (Uwatt 2002:84). The combination of history and imaginative work of art brings about a kind of creative realism that enables art to affect the individuals in the society that the work describes. Therein lies the relevance of historical drama.

The Use of History in Femi Osofisan’s Plays

Four of Osofisan’s plays have been analyzed below to show how the adaptation of oral history serves as both technique and thematic in conscientizing

the masses. The analysis is hinged on the New-Historicists' concern "not only with situating literary texts within power structures but also with seeing them as crucially participating in conflicts of power between various forms of social and political authority" (Habib 2005:762). The plays selected for analysis include *The Chattering and the Song* (henceforth called *The Chatter*), *No More the Wasted Breed* (henceforth called *No More*), *Another Raft* and *Women of Owu*.

The Chattering and the Song is a modern play that treats the problems of the larger Nigerian context of leadership challenges and complex economic contradictions of the capitalist quagmire. The play borrows directly from the ancient Yoruba historical accounts of the old Oyo Empire and a more recent farmers' uprising. In actual Yoruba history, a mighty personality, known as Bashorun Gaha, an overambitious man, became Bashorun and hence head of the Oyo Mesi, Oyo's Council of State. Gaha subverted and set aside the constitution and reigned for twenty years in what was a despotic and ruthless leadership (C.1754 – 1774). He installed and deposed Alaafins at will, and never consulted with his colleagues in the council. However, it was in 1774 that Alaafin Abiodun was able to terminate Gaha's excesses (Atanda 1980: 30).

In his literary tendency and technique of subverting and recreating oral history for his revolutionary and socialist vision, Osofisan injects all of Bashorun Gaha's leadership traits and excesses in Alaafin Abiodun. This suits his artist intentions of creating a modern villain whose leadership stifles the aspirations of the masses. The writer, in trying to keep faith with his immediate Yoruba audience, goes back into their historical repertoire to source for the materials for his pursuit of an egalitarian society.

The play-within-a-play incorporated into the major plot contains the history of the confrontation between Latoye and Alafin Abiodun in the old Oyo Empire in the year 1885 (*The Chatter* 35). The Farmers' Movement and the Farmers' Anthem are actual historical facts that characterized the Agbekoya Farmers' rebellion of 1968 – 1969 in Nigeria's defunct Western Region. Osofisan consciously recreates these oral historical accounts to serve as the skeletal frames on which he anchors the plot of *The Chatter*. On the eve of the stillborn wedding between Sontri and Yajin, the latter demands that a play be acted in honor of the wedding. According to Yajin: "It's the story of a confrontation between Latoye and the famous Alafin Abiodun" (*The Chatter* 24). Roles are subsequently assigned to each of the characters, and we are told later that the stage is reset "till the scene begins to approximate the actual setting of the drama: i.e. a room in ancient Yoruba palace, circa 1885" (*The Chatter* 35).

The playwright's choice of a real historical account is to awaken the people's consciousness of their past as well as raise alarm about the continuity

of their bondage that has persisted from the 19th century to the 20th century. The problems are still current, though the agents of oppression have changed. History, for Osofisan, serves a materialist purpose. Historically, the issue of the people's welfare has been that of historical materialism. The history of mankind shows that human survival depends on the sustenance of production and reproduction of resources. It is about the engagement of social formations and forces which leads to economic changes and development in society over time (Sunday 2011:60). This development is often achieved through the instrument of social relations entered into by the participants in the process of production. In dialectical and historical materialistic terms, the social relations are social classes which appear in the form of the owners/controllers of the means of production and the laborer's, the haves and the have-nots, the ruler and the ruled. The social classes are engaged in one conflict or the other for the economic advantage of their members. It is this conflict that usually results in the termination of one mode of production and the emergence of another.

The justification for the use of the people's history as an oral device in *The Chatter* is captured in Latoye's rhetoric: "Look around you. Look into your past, look into your future. What do you see? Always the same unending tale of oppression. Of poverty, hunger, squalor and disease" (*The Chatter* 42). One can interpret the statement above to be an indication that, from the past to the present, the history of society is that of corruption, despotism, anarchist tendency, betrayal, insensitivity of leaders, coup and counter coup; and the only solution will be for people to look back, mobilize themselves and start a revolution. It is a retelling of their past for transformational purposes. But instead of maintaining the actual historical account of the Alafin Abiodun crushing the opposition against him, Osofisan rewrites this in such a way that Alafin Abiodun is disgraced and defeated by Latoye.

The playwright's re-writing of actual history comes in the play-within-a-play in which Alafin Abiodun is presented as a corrupt, wicked, oppressive and despotic king, against whom the exploited farmers mobilize in a revolutionary struggle led by Latoye, the son of the late Gaha. In the play, the playwright appears to take side with Latoye through the device of role reversal, such that, instead of being suppressed and killed by Alafin Abiodun, Latoye overthrows Alafin Abiodun, thus calling for a social revolution that will raise the consciousness of the subjugated and oppressed to their exploitation by the ruling class, so that they can free themselves from the shackles. Alafin Abiodun loses his magical powers with which he has held the people captive, and, through the force of argument and mytho-historical rendition, Latoye mobilizes them against the oppressive regime. What we see as the outcome of re-enactment is a revolution which ushers in a new dawn. A strong indication of the change that has taken place is seen in "The

Farmers' Anthem", which comes at the end of the revolution:

When everyone's a farmer
 We'll grow enough food...
 When everyone's a farmer
 We'll wipe out the pests
 In the land
 No more injustice
 Labour's for all
 No more oppression
 All hands to hoe. (56)

With the collapse of the repressive regime, the working population which organized the revolution calls for the adoption of farming as the major mode of production for the people. The play seems to suggest that farming as the mainstay of the economy will usher in an egalitarian society devoid of hunger, injustice and oppression.

The plot of *No More the Wasted Breed* is a reflection of African oral history. It is a history of oppression and exploitation in which the priests engage in deception and lies to subjugate the masses - a past of exploitation by the religious leaders who claim to be representatives of the gods serves as the handmaiden for the conflict of the play. The tension in society during the prehistoric era is as a result of the deception of the leaders who had spiritual powers and could use them to exploit the masses. Togun re-echoes the history of human sacrifice as a solution to society's problems:

These old ones confirm it [...] every season, [...] the chosen prepared himself, with chalk and camwood, beads of cowries ... he swept up on his head our loads of sin and disease [...] of our lives [...] all the tadpoles of our so tragic fate [...] No mortal must touch him at that moment, no human voice speak to him, for his recognition itself is lethal [...] he must row out alone up the creek, to a single spot which he alone recognized. Which only the chosen know and nobody else. And there, alone with the goddess, he concluded his terrible pact, the rite from which we all drew our fresh water of life. (*No More* 88-9)

However, Osofisan transplants the religious motif of the past into the political present to show that corruption and deception are still the order of the day in the postcolonial era. The priests and spiritual leaders of the past, as represented by Togun, Olokun and Elusu, can be paralleled to the politicians of today. In a similar way as the gods selected the poor as a sacrifice so do the politicians want the poor to make sacrifices for the good of the society. The

point is that Osofisan has relied on the oral account of not only the Yoruba but also of the entire African society, to present contemporary society. The past in which the sacrifice of the poor is the only solution to a socioeconomic problem only tells us of the class distinction and the attendant exploitation of the lower class that characterize some modern African societies.

In his use of the familiar oral account in this play, Osofisan's audience will be able to look back and see that exploitation and oppression of the ordinary people did not start today. It is rooted in the African past. But Osofisan's intention for incorporating the ritual is to expunge it from the sub-consciousness of the masses. The pathetic dimension to it is that it is only the masses that are to appear at the village shrine on behalf of society. Biokun learns the truth eventually, and raises a moral burden:

You ask no sacrifice of them, no token of allegiance. They're rich and few, they are the beloved of your priest. But we're numerous and nameless, like the sand of the beach, we're wretched and expendable. A wasted breed, we're ready, at a signal, to forsake our deepest dreams, and take out a canoe in savage weather. We'll give our life, our blood, while they, the privileged, remain here on the shore. (*No More* 98)

In the ritual theatre of the modern society, only the poor are both the sacrifices and the bearers of the sacrifices. Biokun is to bear the dirt to the place of sacrifice, and he is equally the one to be sacrificed. Biokun is Osofisan's voice in calling for an end to such traditional-religious practices that are not only anti-people but are also oppressive and exploitative. The playwright draws the attention of Biokun (the fated carrier) to the history of deception and exploitation of the masses by the leaders, who parade themselves as old men and women, gods and goddesses, controlling the affairs of the ordinary people. Thus, through Saluga, Osofisan queries the history and tradition of human sacrifice:

Tell me, why is it always us who give our lives? Why is it always the poor who are called upon to sacrifice? Why is it always the wretched, never a wealthy man, never the son of a king, who is suddenly discovered to bear the mark of destiny at difficult moments, and pushed on to fulfill himself in suicidal tasks? Why? (*No More* 94).

Osofisan calls for an end to the ritual practices that turn the poor into perpetual losers. In a deliberate twist of fate and history, Elusu (who is the goddess of the inland waters, who also disguises as Old Woman, tormenting the masses), is made to die, instead of Biokun. Olokun mourns her demise,

thus: "Priest, tides change for gods as they do for men. It is not a beautiful moment, when a goddess dies. The sorrow lasts a whole generation. My wife is gone, the beloved" (*No More* 99). This is the way Osofisan rewrites the history of the exploitation of the masses, usually thought of as scapegoats to save the rich. The result of the dramatic irony is captured in this scene:

Togun: And the people bursting out of their huts! They are dancing!

Saluga: The whole world's coming awake again! Leaves are turning green,
look!

Biokun: Let us go! Let's go and join the dancing! (*No More* 100)

The change desired by the people and dreamt by the playwright came through the awareness created through the conscientization on their history. It is only when the people look back to their history and ask questions that they can be freed from the bondage of ignorance.

Tales of catastrophic occurrences feature in African societies, especially how they are linked with the anger of one god or goddess. This becomes the device with which Osofisan constructs *Another Raft*. It can be easily understood that the story is set in a time past - a society in which there is much belief in the role of the supernatural in the affairs of human beings. The tale revolves around the belief in the fatalistic vision of life - divine responsibility. The past underscores the worldview in which the gods are shown to have an overwhelming influence on the lives of human beings, who must consult and make sacrifices to them in order to avoid outrageous fortune. This is what Osofisan brings into this play. It is the story of a community immersed in catastrophe, and the solution must be at the instance of the gods:

The Ifa priest, Orousi, was summoned at the height of the floods.
He cast his nuts. Through his mouth, Ifa's message was unambiguous: the ancient rites of collective cleansing must be revived.
(*Another Raft* 5)

The society is an orally inclined one, with its ancient rites and customs intact. Every problem is approached from the perspective of consulting the gods before any other measures. In this case, traditional-religious and ritual practices were used in the oral past to subjugate the ordinary people. The traditional rulers used the religious belief systems to emasculate the unsuspecting masses.

The Agbekoya Farmers' Revolt is another significant Yoruba oral account which is also integrated into the plot of the play. The playwright cannot do without showing the account of the maltreatment of farmers in Aiyedade

[possibly a fictive representation of Agbekoya, where the actual farmers' uprising took place], the setting of the play. Reore, the leader of the farmers, grants us an insight into their exploitation:

We toil and toil, nursing Eledumare's precious earth, tenderly.
And then one man we never see, who wines and dines in the soft
fairyland of that Lagos city we hear so much about, he just sends
his agents down to collect our harvest, leaving us the chaff [...]
(*Another Raft* 27)

The present-day squandermania and the exploitation of the labor of the masses are as old as society itself. The exploiters will always attribute the problems to the gods and then recommend that the solution will be to make sacrifices to them. The playwright finds a contemporary resemblance of the dehumanization of the working population in the enslavement of farmers by their leaders in pre-colonial Nigeria.

The play is a scathing critique against the past that recommends sacrifices to the gods as the solution to societal problems. The rationale for the sacrifices is questioned by the playwright through Ekuroola who laments: "And that's why we are here now, isn't it? To calm that raging stomach of your goddess?" (*Another Raft* 13). Reore, the farmer, also protests this deceptive ancient practice as he wonders: "I had raised the fattest yams, and they clapped for me, and sent me along to placate a goddess I had never offended" (*Another Raft* 28). Osofisan vividly portrays the need to protest against the tradition of making sacrifices to the gods as the solution to the problems of the masses. He wants the masses to stand up and defend themselves. Therefore, to put an end to the false and misleading ancient belief and practice of hinging solution on ritual practices, especially that of sacrificing the poor, Osofisan reconstructs history in such a way that the journey on a raft (to perform human sacrifice) turns awry, and the sacrifice is truncated in a reversal of fortunes that sees the poor becoming aware of their predicament. They, thus, rise up against their oppressors, turning them into sacrifices instead. This is in keeping with Osofisan's tradition of violating and rebelling against the history, myth, religion and customs that dehumanize and exploit the masses. The story thrives on the mobilization of the masses to overthrow all agents and systems of oppression and exploitation. This can only be achieved through conscientization and the collective will of the people. Reore, the farmer, exclaims triumphantly: "There's no goddess but our muscles! The strength of our forces/combined! Rowing together, working together!" (*Another Raft* 85).

The play upholds the validity of human responsibility in the process of effecting change in the lives of the oppressed. Revolution and the subsequent

establishment of an egalitarian society can only come from the collective will of the people, not from the “gods and goddesses” they have as their leaders – as history has shown. In “A Note on the Play’s Genesis” of Femi Osofisan’s *Women of Owu*, the playwright readily points out the actual historical occurrence on which the play is based:

In 1821 or thereabouts, the combined forces of the armies of Ijebu and Ife, two Yoruba kingdoms in the south of what is now known as Nigeria, along with mercenaries recruited from Oyo refugees fleeing downwards from the Nigerian savannah land, sacked the city of Owu after a seven-year siege.

Owu was a model city-state, one of the most prosperous and best organized of those times. The Allied Forces had attacked it with the pretext of liberating the flourishing market of Apomu from Owu’s control. Owu closed the gates of its formidable city walls, but it soon had to face the problem of drought when the rains stopped in the third year of the siege. This was a boon to the Allied Forces of course, and finally, in the seventh year they entered the city, and it was all over. These Allied Forces, determined that the city must never rise again, reduced the place to complete rubble, and set fire to it. They slaughtered all the males, adult and children, and carried away the females into slavery. Owu was never rebuilt. (*Women of Owu* vii)

Here, the playwright sets the background influence of his play; once again, locating his art within the vicinity of history. *Women of Owu* is an adaptation of Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*. In *Women of Owu*, the playwright transplants Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* into the African environment to show the devastating effect of war on society. Weaving historical occurrences into his plays, the playwright recasts the tragic tale of Owu kingdom that was attacked by two other kingdoms in 1821. The play advances the themes of inter-communal conflicts, divine and human causes of war, crime and punishment, predestination and collective struggle, all from the African perspective. The playwright introduces aesthetic elements such as Yoruba gods and goddesses who control the affairs of humans, lamentations and dirges of widows who weep over the destruction of Owu, and songs/dances of celebration. The play resonates with the historical fact that the poor, the weak and women are always under threat of oppression and exploitation by the privileged, the strong and the masculine. Having established the historical motivation for his writing, the playwright in “A Note on the Play’s Genesis” then settles on the task at hand: “So it was quite logical therefore that, as I pondered over this adaptation of Euripides’ play, in the season of the Iraqi War, the memories that were awakened in me should be those of the tragic Owu War...” (*Women of Owu* vii).

In the play, we meet an already defeated and dismembered Owu city. Through flashbacks, we recover the earlier part of the story that after a seven-year siege, Owu finally capitulated to the superior combined forces of Ijebu, Oyo and Ife. The playwright satirizes the masses for living under the stranglehold of ignorance for hundreds of years past. First, through Lawumi, who says: "Owu forgot its history, forgot its origins!" (*Women of Owu* 19). Later, the playwright removes the hood from their eyes and they see the truth: "The lesson is clear. It's us, not the gods, / Who create war. It's us, we human beings, who can kill it" (*Women of Owu* 15).

The play differs significantly from the other three in that the playwright does not attempt to re-write or reconstruct the history of the fall of Owu. This significant departure marks the play out as a static work of tragedy, where divine and human responsibilities serve to engender a feeling of pity and fear. However, there are two inclusions made by the playwright in re-crafting this play. The first is the creation of awareness among the women that they have to reject the gods as their supposed saviors. They have hitherto lived under a history of deception whereby they are made to believe that it is through sacrifices that their existence would be guaranteed. But the playwright conscientizes them to come to terms with the fact that the gods have always failed them, especially at the critical time of war when they most needed divine intervention. One of the women, in a provocative rhetoric, asked Anlugbua, the *Orisa*,

After three years, the city
 Began to starve of food and fruit,
 And the streets stank of disease and death.
 But we never ceased
 To worship you, or pour libation at your shrine!
 Where were you, Anlugbua? (*Women of Owu* 7)

This is the playwright's rejection of the traditional-religious history of rituals. The other inclusion is the creation of women of strong will and great awareness, who are ready to salvage what is left of their city. This is done through the character of Orisaye, who rouses other women: "So my dear women, suspend your dirges! Let us sing and / Dance instead for the victory that is coming!" (*Women of Owu* 30).

The singing and dancing by the women is the result of the freedom of the soul and mind which they have come to enjoy through the process of awareness. They are still hopeful in the midst of tragedy, that their fate lies not in the hands of the gods (leaders), but in their own hands. The play offers an insightful critique on the evils of war, especially its effect on women and children. The ceaseless destruction of lives and property and

the decimation of kingdoms have characterized African society as history shows forms the play's subject matter. It therefore, upholds the campaign for peace and unity in society.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that history has been used as a predominant motif in the construction of the plots of the selected plays of Femi Osofisan's plays. The four plays analyzed are set in the historical past; hence, the historical events which the playwright incorporates exist in oral forms. To suit his artistic vision of changing the social order, the playwright reworks the historical facts available to him in a way that the fictionalized indices serve to awaken the masses for a revolution. Femi Osofisan's recourse to history as the subject matter of his plays underlines aspects such as wars and inter-communal conflicts, human and divine responsibility, social inequality and exploitation of the poor, the weak, women, failure of leadership, predestination, unity and collective struggle, women as society's last hope of survival. These are some of the by-products of history, as the human society has, from pre-literate age, experienced anti-human and dehumanizing episodes. History is, therefore, a veritable tool of conscientization in literature, as it revisits a people's past with a view to salvaging the present and inventing the future.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M. H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9th Edition. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Asein, Samuel. "Literature as History: Crisis, Violence, and Strategies of Commitment in Nigerian Writing." *Literature and Modern West African Culture*. D. I. Nwoga. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1978:97-116.
- Atanda, J. *An Introduction to Yoruba History*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1980.
- Dunmade, Olufemi. "Tradition and the Individual Talent: Aesthetics and Categorization in Modern African Literature". In Efurosibina Adegbiya. (ed). *The English Language and Literature in English: an Introductory Handbook*. Ilorin: Department of Modern European Languages, Unilorin, 1999:249-262.
- Egya, Sule and Ismail Bala. "Reconstructing Misrule and Oppression in Recent Nigerian Fiction: A Historicist Reading of Okey Ndiibe's *Arrow of Rain* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" *New Studies on Language, Literature and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Aliyu Mohammed at Sixty-Five*. Zaria: ABU Press, 2010:341-352.
- Gbilekaa, Saint. *Radical Theatre in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Caltop Publisher, 1997.
- Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005

- Ibitokun, Benedict. *African Drama and the Yoruba World-View*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1995.
- Irele, Abiola. "Orality, Literacy, and African Literature." In *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (Eds). Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009. 74-82.
- Oko, E. "Politics as the Informing Spirit in Major African Realistic Fiction." *Literature and Society: Selected Essays on African Literature*. Emenyonu, Ernest. (ed.) Oguta: Zim Pan African Publishers, 1986:146-162.
- Orji-Mba, O. B. *Oral Dramatic Techniques in Femi Osofisan's Plays*. An Unpublished MA Dissertation Submitted to the University of Abuja, Nigeria, 2014.
- Osofisan, Femi. *The Chattering and the Song*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1977.
- . *No More the Wasted Breed*. Ibadan: Longman, 1982.
- . *Another Raft*. Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1989.
- . *Women of Owu*. Ibadan: University Press, 2006.
- Sunday, Adejoh. *Foundation of Political Economy and Elements of Marxism*. Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nig. Ltd, 2011.
- Traore, Bakary. *The Black African Theatre and its Social Functions*. Trans. Dapo Adelugba. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972.
- Uwatt, Effio B. (ed). *Playwriting and Directing in Nigeria: Interviews with Ola Rotimi*. Lagos: Apex Books, 2002.

CHAPTER 4

‘As it was in the Beginning...’

Religious Fanaticism and the Quest for a New Messiah in the Plays of Derek Walcott and Bate Besong

Yimbu Emmanuel Nchia

Émile Durkheim considers religion as a united system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, “things that set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church; all those who adhere to them” (Jones 1988:78). He further posits that culture is the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. What Durkheim is stressing here is the close relationship that exists between religion and culture. The debate on the relationship between culture and religion, and the role played by religion in oppressing and exploiting the colonized people have been the subject of volumes of publications by critics and creative writers across the African continent. The West in their attempt to dominate the colonized world had to impose their culture which they consider as superior on the colonizers. Religion and in this case Christianity, therefore, was used by both the colonialists and their neocolonial counterparts as a weapon for political and cultural domination and economic exploitation.

Religion as a Tool for Colonial and Neocolonial Leadership Politics

The introduction of Christianity in the Caribbean and Africa, in particular, played an important role in shaping the thought of Walcott and Besong. To gain and control economic and political power, the colonizers attempted to control the cultural environment: education, language, literature, songs,

forms of dances and most especially religion, hoping in this way to control people's values and ultimately their worldviews. Most colonialist cultures and value systems were adulterated during the colonial encounter and its accompanying Christian missionary evangelization which seriously disrupted the indigenous cultures as cultural maneuvers and religious hypocrisy became the order of the day. One would not be wrong to say that the plays of Walcott and Besong to some extent, explores that particular moment in a society's experience when European culture arrived, toppled the colonized value systems and in their place planted the politics of money. Walcott's and Besong's excessive allusion to the Bible in their plays only go to justify the fact that religion and its churches are remote controls for Western imperialism. Virtually all allusions to the Bible in the works under study carry with them satirical implications. Religion as noticed in Walcott's and Besong's plays still remains an important instrument of imperialism. This is because, while claiming with the aid of missionary evangelization that they were bringing light to a primitive people, and relieving them from the pangs of ignorance, the native culture was gradually and imperceptibly being invaded by the settler values as the natives were tactfully being alienated by Western political, economic and cultural influences.

Cognizant of the fact that independence was going to liberate the post-colonial people from colonial domination, the church became the greatest opponent of the struggle for freedom as Christianity's main duty was to capture the soul and mind of the people. Religion became an opium as it facilitated the role of the capitalists and those who resisted religion were called to order with the gun. A perfect articulation of the exploitative and double standard nature of Christianity is that of Gicaamba in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *I Will Marry When I Want* where he affirms that:

Religion is not the same thing as God. When the British imperialists came here in 1885, all the missionaries of all the churches held the bible in the left hand and the gun in the right hand. The white man wanted us to be drunk with religion while, he in the meantime was mapping and grabbing our land, starting factories and business on our sweat. (56-7)

From the anecdote above, one realizes that in areas where religion could not be used to blindfold the masses into total submission and servitude, the colonialist adopted violence symbolized here by the gun. Ngugi's views above are very similar to those made by Kwame Nkrumah who posits that "when the Whites came to Africa, they taught us to pray and close our eyes and before we could open our eyes, our land was gone" (23) Ngugi further argues in *Homecoming* that colonial religion did not only oppress and exploit the

colonial masses but equally created a feeling of inferiority complex amongst them as it encouraged, through the neocolonial elites, the suppression of indigenous cultures. To him:

The effect of colonial presence was to create elites who took on the tongue and adopted the style of the conquerors. They harkened to the voice of the missionary's god, cried Hallelujah, and raised their eyes to heaven. They derided the old gods and they too recoiled with a studied (or genuine) horror from primitive rites of their people... they despised anything that smelt of the primitive past. It is this group mostly whom Achebe must have had in mind when he cried: If I were God, I would regard as very worst our acceptance-for whatever reason-of racial inferiority. (1972:10)

Similarly, in Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, Toundi denounces his natural father in favour of Father Gilbert, the head of the church. In *The Old Man and the Medal*, Meka gives up his land to the Priest and goes to live in a "Small wretched hut in the village" (9). A similar experience occurs in Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba* and *King Lazarus*, where Father Drumont and Father Le Guen respectively, used the church to consolidate their control over the indigenous people and thus maintain the security of the oppressor.

Nowhere else has the adverse effects of Christianity been as vividly portrayed as in Bole Butake's *Lake God*. It is with the weapon of religion, for example, that Father Leo uses to hijack the local leadership. With a typical colonialist rhetoric and mentality, Father Leo criticizes the traditional activities and institutions of the lake people such as Kwifon and Fubuen as barbaric and heathen and prides himself as one who brought civilization to the hitherto backward and primitive people of the lake community. In a sermon to the congregation of women, Father Leo emphasizes the importance of Christianity and by implication, western civilization to the people:

Let us pray...I want to talk to you this morning about recent events of the last few weeks in this village...there is a group of five rebellious women in this village who are leading the rest of you astray. They are pulling you away from the steep and narrow road that leads to everlasting life and taking you along the big road that leads directly to hell, where Satan reigns supreme and where you will burn in everlasting fire. Yensi, Kima'a and the other devils are taking you on a fast and easy ride on the big motor to Lucifer's kingdom. (Pointing at the women in the congregation) you were in the Fibuen, not so? And you too. And even you Sister Maria. You are not ashamed that you went to soil the Virgin Mother's

name in Satan's play? You all were in the Fibuen, participating in Satan's play and eating of his food and taking oaths. All for what my children? ... Have you stopped to count the blessings the lord has showered on you in this village?... a school for your children, a Health Centre for the young and old and sparkling pipe-borne water and big motor road. Above all, God has blessed this village with an educated Christian Fon who is held in high esteem by the government of this country. (32-33)

Religion brainwashed Fon Joseph to the extent that he denounced the tradition and practices of his people. This also shows how the Fon has been off-rooted from the custom and tradition of his people by colonialist religion. The prayer above also justifies the continuous critique of Christianity in most of the postcolonial literary works because, as portrayed in *Lake God*, religion relegated the African value systems to the background and instituted itself as a veritable instrument of exploitation and oppression.

As Sarah Anyang Agbor underscores in *Critical Perspectives in Commonwealth Literature*, the rejection of Western religion by postcolonial writers became another form of counter-discourse "religious counter-discourse" (138). Anyang goes further to argue that the church did understand that the native ways of life such as their ritual ceremonies and traditional healings were quite different from those of Christianity. In an attempt to project their cultural practices, postcolonial playwrights resort, as a counter-discursive measure, to satirize Christianity by exposing its exploitative and hypocritical manner. In the drama of Walcott and Besong, Christianity is presented as exploitative, oppressive and hypocritical and not as an instrument for human salvation. The playwrights prove that religion cannot provide the oppressed masses with the most needed messiah who will emancipate them from their present predicaments. As such, the sustained ideology in the plays under study is the quest for a new messiah who as indicated in the plays, must emanate from amongst the masses. Derek Walcott in almost all his plays portrays religion as an instrument of colonial exploitation and oppression. In *The Sea at Dauphin (Henceforth The Sea)*, Afa in the following words exposes the exploitative nature of religion in his perception of God:

God!...That is God! A big fish eating small ones. And the sea, that thing there, not a priest white pale like a shake belly we must feed until we dead, not no young Frenchman lock up in a church don't know coolie man dying because he will beg...this scapular not dauphin own! Dauphin people build the church and pray and feed you, not their people, and look at dauphin...look at it! You see? Poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? (73)

The image of the “big fish” eating “small ones” emphasizes the exploitative nature of religion. Afa’s question at the end of the quotation “where all the prayers?” becomes an expression of the frustrations of the West Indian masses towards religion. Religion and its prayers have only served to exploit the masses to feed the priest and not the people because they continue to live in poverty. One is therefore not surprised when Afa concludes elsewhere in the play that “God is a Whiteman. The sky is his blue eyes, his spit on dauphin people is the sea” (61). As a result of the excessive exploitation of the West Indian masses by Christianity, the masses’ notion of Christianity and God have to change. To Augustin and Afa for example, God is not some supreme being but fellow human. God to them becomes a metaphor for the person who is able to provide one’s material needs and since, in the context of the play, God fails to relieve them from their hopelessness, they are obliged to consider each other as their own God. “Gracia is God?, No you is God”(62).

Walcott’s ideology in *The Sea* is very similar to that expressed in *O Babylon!* in which the West Indian masses consider Haile Selassie as their own God. To the Rastafarians, he is the one who will lead them to the Promised Land. In this play, one notices a conscious attempt by the playwrights to project the Rastafarian religion and their worship of and belief in Emperor Haile Selassie as their messiah. For example, in the play, Sufferer says “Selassie is a god...the lion of Judah, the roots of David” (181). By projecting the West Indian religious practice in this play, Walcott is by implication discarding the Eurocentric claims made by the colonizers that colonized societies were a primitive people with no religion or culture. This equally corroborates the claims once made by Chinua Achebe that Africans did not hear the world culture for the first time from Europeans.

In a more overt manner, Walcott in *O Babylon!* considers religion as a “trap” that does not only exploit the West Indians but keeps them in perpetual bondage. As Aaron affirms:

I warn you not to sing revival hymn in this place! And in front of my temple! I try to teach you that hymn singing is a trap, is part of the Babylonian plot to keep we in chains, spiritual chains, you stubborn red bitch! You refuse to understand. And you know why? You have the wrong blood in you. You can’t shed the whiteness of the devil... (208)

Religion thus becomes a ploy to keep the West Indian masses in chains because religion arrests the soul of the masses and creates the opportunity for the colonialists to oppress and exploit them. This view is buttressed by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* when he posits that throughout history,

the law has always been designed to protect the interest of the dominant class and that religion supports the status quo (for example, by teaching that those who accept hardship in this life will be rewarded in the next). (1988,92) Aaron sees any Afro-West Indian who subscribes to Christianity as one with the “wrong blood” because to him, singing religious hymnals is a trap to keep the West Indians in chains.

Another fine example of the use of religion as an ideology of oppression and exploitation is revealed in the words of Dewes, earlier in the play when he says “Cannibals who get high on cannabis! I’d sue them, but they don’t believe in money. I may be a capitalist, but I am also a Christian. They interpret God’s word to their convenience, they babble about Babylon...” (247). As a veritable instrument of oppression, *The Bible* becomes a book that can be interpreted as the need arises to fulfill the exploiters’ selfish intentions. It is as a result of the exploitative nature of religion that Martin Luther King was forced to warn that:

A religion true to its nature must be concerned about man’s social conditions...any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them, is a dry-as-dust religion. (Scott 1983: 57)

Luther’s argument, therefore, is that religion should be concerned with both man’s soul as well as the social conditions that shape life. This, unfortunately, is not what obtains in the universe of Walcott and Besong because religion in the context of their plays targets the soul and neglects the social conditions (the body) that harbor that soul.

Similarly, Bate Besong as a playwright is very obsessed with religious fanatics. His plays, especially *Requiem for the Last Kaiser (Henceforth Requiem)* considers religion and the church as a veritable instrument for exploitation. In an open and confrontational manner, Besong attacks and satirizes the hypocritical and exploitative nature of the church. The church as an institution is vehemently and consistently under attack in *Requiem*.

One character which Besong uses to indict religion and the church is Evangelist Absalom Atangana of La Vraie Eglise de Politique D’Agidigidi. In *Requiem*, he quotes only those sections of *The Bible* that justify his exploitation. When he realizes that Woman cannot be easily deceived, he says “she cannot be a good Christian” (20). According to Atangana, good Christians are those who listen to them and follow their instructions even at the detriment of their own happiness. In an attempt to justify the chaos and poverty that reign in Agidigidi, Atangana tells Woman “Take your Bible, read it from Genesis to Revelation, you’ll know what I’m talking about, nation will fight

against nations, state against the state..." (8). To Atangana therefore, the problems in Agidigidi are signs of end times. Atangana's inability to quote the precise book or verse where such a revelation is found is in itself, an element of Besong's satire. Besong considers those who propagate religion in Agidigidi as "vile verkrampptes expert thieves...religious mongers and liars...those who make hegemonistic adventurism an article of faith" (9).

Equally, the following confrontation between Woman and Atangana is a glaring example of the exploitative and oppressive nature of the church:

Atangana: Signs will no longer be taken for wonders. In his name, I offer a Good Evening!

Woman: (*contemptuously*). Stuff your hypocritical good evening. So long as your church monarchs anoint and bless the elephantine plunder in Agidigidi; I'll have none of your white-washed theology.

Atangana: (*grimly*). This is the eve of the lamb's coming. My name is Evangelist Absalom Absalom Amougou Atangana

Woman: At the eve of that coming many false prophets shall arise each confessing to speak in his name.

Atangana: What is your problem then?

Woman: The real problem is between the two irreconcilable camps: the allies and customers of imperialism: Those who sign unequal treaties and agreements whereby their colonial puppet-masters enjoy special privileges. (Pause) see? the proprietors of corporate stores of barter the patriotic-minded progressive forces prepared to stand up against them...(9)

The dialogue between Atangana and Woman buttresses the fact that the church plays a vital role in assisting the imperialists to oppress and exploit the masses. Woman refers to Atangana's religion and preaching as "white-washed theology" because it is that which is meant to exploit the masses. Elsewhere in the play, when asked by Atangana to carry her cross and follow Christ the Savior, Woman rebukes his religion and his Savior because to her, Atangana's savior is "molded in the image of local exploiters and foreign parasites"(14). In the same vein, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* seem to be so aware of the exploitative nature of religion that they will not compromise with it. Kimathi rebukes religion and its practitioners in Kenya as:

Policemen of the gospel? Warder of souls?
How long will you continue being their messenger?
Pastor, tell me the difference between padre and settler...
Betrayal prophets.... (49)

In fact, there is no difference between the “Padre” and the “Settler” because they are all birds of a feather. The “Padre” robs the soul while the “Settler” does same to African land and labor. The church initiated serious conflicts amongst African and this stifled concrete efforts in the independence struggle as it divided not only people but also families. Religion is attacked in *I Will Marry When I Want* as “the alcohol of the soul” (61). The manner in which Kiguunda is robbed of his one and the half-acre of land when he borrows money to do a church wedding is a clear indication of the predatory nature of Christian religion.

The examples above prove that the colonialists and the neocolonialists regarded themselves as “culturally superior” and as such, they adopted a foreign religion both as a means of distorting the indigenous peoples’ belief system and as an instrument of oppression and exploitation. From an ideological standpoint, therefore, religion, in this case, Christianity, becomes a veritable instrument of exploitation and oppression as it assisted the imperialist in their colonizing mission.

From the instances cited so far, one would not be wrong to say that Walcott’s *The Sea* and *O Babylon!* and Bate Besong’s *Requiem* are sustained dramatic critiques of Western religious perception in particular and Western ideology as a whole. In terms of ideology, one realizes from the evidence above that the colonizers and the colonized notions of religion differ because while the former sees religion as a means towards gaining salvation, the latter sees it as an instrument of exploitation and cultural oppression. Walcott and Besong perceive religion as a weapon of colonial and neocolonial oppression and exploitation. The inability of Christianity to emancipate the masses from oppression, exploitation, suffering and poverty is responsible for the author’s sustained quest for a new messiah.

The Messianic Vision in the Plays of Derek Walcott and Bate Besong

Besides thematic and stylistic similarities, the dramas of Walcott and Besong share a wide range of similarities in the manner in which characters are portrayed. In most of their plays, especially those under study, main characters are presented not just as passive onlookers of the events in their societies but as “shakers and movers of history”. They are imbued with extraordinary abilities and portrayed as messiahs to their societies. By messianic vision, I am referring to the sustained attempt by these playwrights in presenting characters as saviors to their societies because they are responsible for initiating the reforms and arousing the consciousness of the masses toward liberation and freedom. As postcolonial playwrights, Walcott and Besong through character portrayal seek to discard the Eurocentric

myth which stipulates that solutions to the problems plaguing postcolonial societies must always come from the West. This they do by creating characters whose principal roles are to confront and challenge the existing social order while at the same time, proposing valuable solutions to their burning societal problems. Characters like Makak in *Dream*, Ti Jean in *Ti Jean and His Brothers*, Jackson in *Pantomime*, Emperor Haile Selassie in *O Babylon!*, Woman in *Requiem*, Narrator in *Beasts of No Nations* and Belle in *The Banquet* are all characters created by the playwrights with a redemption mission. They all in one way or the other are responsible for raising the consciousness of the masses and initiating the most needed revolution towards the emancipation of their societies.

Derek Walcott projects characters in his plays in a manner that seems to suggest that the complete emancipation of the Afro-West Indians lies in the hands of the West Indians themselves. In *Dream*, *O Babylon!*, *Pantomime* and *Ti-Jean*. Walcott's main characters are presented not just as ordinary individuals but as redeemers of their society. They can thus be regarded as messiahs.

In *Dream*, for example, there is enough evidence to qualify Makak a Christ-like figure. Walcott's messianic vision is brought to the limelight in *Dream* through Makak. Though presented as an ordinary charcoal burner, Makak becomes an example of what an Afro-Caribbean must become in order to emancipate him or herself from all forms of oppression. As William S. Haney II has suggested, *Dream* can be considered as an allegory of racial identity based on the visionary experience of the protagonist, Makak (French patois for monkey or ape). To Haney therefore, Makak's vision throughout the play could be paralleled to that of the playwright. As the savior that he is in the world of the play, Makak is imbued like Christ with mystical powers that can enable him to reverse the situation of his people. He is as mentioned in the play, "the direct descendant of African kings, a healer of leprosy and the saviour of his race" (224).

Also in part I, scene I of the play, Makak's actions expose the supernatural power imbued on him when he rescues Josephus, the victim of a snake bite, by holding live coals in his hand over the victim's forehead. This power seems to associate Makak with the African traditional witch doctor, but during the healing, he also includes the European tradition by invoking Moses and the "blazing bush" (248). He does not only successfully tell Josephus to sweat to break his fever, but also enjoins him and his entourage to "believe in me? Faith, faith! Believe in yourselves" (249). As Paula Burnett notes, "When Walcott's drama enacts such rites as a healing, a quasi-resurrection as in *Dream*, a miracle performed by the least respected person of a hierarchical racialized community, and it does so as part of its strategy to mark the social deprivation but spiritual strength of a real history

group". (Burnett 2000: 103) Makak's mystical experience connects the play to what Robert Forman describes as the Grassroots Spirituality Movement, which professes "a pantheistic ultimate that is dwelling, sometimes bodily, as the deepest self and accessed through not-strictly rational means of self-transformation" (Forman 1999: 51). This self-transformation is realized through Makak's dream.

Throughout *Dream*, therefore, Makak's situation is very similar to that of Christ. For example, he is jailed with two felons, Tigre and Souris, symbolic of the two thieves crucified with Christ. The manner in which Walcott profiles Makak in *Dream* suggests that he serves as a messiah figure to his compatriots who like himself, are subjugated by colonial brain-washing on the one hand, while simultaneously pressured to return to the purity of their ancestral roots in Africa on the other. In searching for their cultural identity, figures like Makak, Tigre, Souris, Corporal Lestrades and the other subalterns are inspired by Makak not to become mimics of one or more cultures but genuine hybrids capable of rising above prescribed boundaries by rediscovering themselves. From a messianic visionary perspective, therefore, *Dream* becomes a profound commentary on the role the Afro-West Indians must play to liberate themselves from both physical and mental oppression.

As in *Dream*, Walcott's Ti-Jean in *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* becomes the messiah who is responsible for liberating the Afro-West Indians from physical and psychological slavery. Though the smallest amongst the three brothers, Ti-Jean is neither imbued with physical strength like Gros Jean, nor intellectual prioress like Mi Jean. He relies on his intuition and his communion with the other little animals to defeat the White Devil. Like the Biblical David who succeeds to conquer Goliath, Ti-Jean defeats Planter and this act in the context of the play symbolizes the complete destruction of the institution of slavery and slave trade. By alluding to the Biblical story of David and Goliath, Walcott, in other words, is saying that it is not the size of an individual that matters but his vision. Just like David, Ti-Jean is small in size but harbors a deep vision and intuition and it is these qualities that justify his defeat of the White Planter. This Biblical allusion gives the play a religious undertone and re-emphasizes the playwright's messianic vision.

Also, Ti-Jean's defeat of the devil qualifies him as the redeemer of his society not only from slavery but from poverty and oppression. Walcott seems to insinuate through this play that the Afro-Caribbeans can only truly emancipate themselves if there is collective coordination, organization and strategizing. Ti-Jean takes advice from his mother, collaborates with the little animals, and all this helps him to strategize better for the battle against the White Devil. If Gros-Jean and Mi-Jean fail to redeem their society, it is because, like Mboysi in Butake's *The Survivals*, their efforts are not backed up by collective coordination as they rely solely on their individual talents.

The fact that they fail to serve as their society's Messiahs by redeeming it from slavery, poverty and oppression buttresses the claims once made by the Brazilian dramatist Augusto Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed* that "the process of conquering oppression requires collective struggle and development of revolutionary consciousness and awareness" (Boal 1998: 14).

If Ti-Jean becomes the messiah of his society it is partly because his actions are supported by the entire community (his mother and the forest creatures). Ti-Jean can, therefore, be considered, from a visionary artistic point of view, as one through whom Walcott imagines the kind of behavior West Indians must adopt to salvage their society from all forms of oppression and dictatorship. This attitude is seen in the play through the character of Ti-Jean, who in the context of the drama, can be qualified as a messiah. Furthermore, in *O Babylon!*, Walcott projects Emperor Haile Selassie as the messiah of the West Indian masses. His heroic visit to the West Indies is reminiscent of that of Christ into Jerusalem. The presence and emphasis on the Rastafarian cult gives the play a spiritual dimension rooted in the Rastafarian tradition. As Patrick Taylor notes:

Rastafari reasoning lays claim to an ancient African biblical tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as expressed in the thirteenth century Kebra Nagast, the narrative of the Ethiopian nation. Quintessentially Caribbean, Rastafari is an expression of a Caribbean natural identity that is fundamentally African yet forever marked by Europe and India. (Taylor, 2001, 9)

Taylor shows that Caribbean writers such as Walcott and Roger Mais are writers whose works are deeply rooted in the Rastafarian cult. In Roger Mais' *Brotherman*, the main character Brotherman confirms the Afro-West Indians as God's chosen people. This is noticed in the novel when Brotherman says "But de spirit of de Lawd passed over into Ethiopia, after the queen of Sheba came to Solomon and learn his wisdom. And passed over back to her land. So it was black men out of Africa who become God's chosen people, for they had learnt de way" (ibid, 72). Similarly, in Walcott's *O Babylon*, the main character named Sufferer poetically states:

In him (Emperor Selassie) is beauty. In him is wisdom for when Sheba travel to Ethiopia her jangling procession on the horizon a moving oasis of palms and banner, Lion in the desert rise up to look she couple with Solomon and from their deeds sprang Ras Makonnen, the vine and the fig tree of fragrant Zion, Selassie himself. (73)

The scenario above is reminiscent of Christ's hilarious entry into

Jerusalem and the Lion symbol (lion of Judah, African lion) and its messianic message – wait for the coming of the savior all projects Selassie as the redeemer of the people and highlights the author's messianic vision. The Rastafarians see Haile Selassie as the direct descendant of Christ and the one to lead them back to the Promised Land – Africa. Throughout the play *O Babylon!*, the main theme is waiting for the arrival of Selassie whom the masses consider as the Lion of Judah and their redeemer. Moreover, Derek Walcott in *Pantomime* portrays Jackson as the liberator of his race. As the messianic hero that he is, he uses his intelligence to improvise scenes that will ridicule the Whites and force Harry to unconsciously tell the barbaric story of his white race. Jackson's individual consciousness becomes the collective consciousness of his black race and the numerous improvisations, a means to liberate his race from all forms of slavery, exploitation and oppression.

Similarly, like Derek Walcott, the messianic vision is equally noticeable in the drama of Bate Besong. In Besong's *Requiem*, for example, Woman is raised by the playwright to the level of a messiah. She is imbued with extraordinary talents good enough to permit her to initiate the most needed revolution. Having suffered oppression for too long, Woman (who equally doubles as the leader of the marginalized in the play) begins her redemption mission by recruiting a vanguard including Students and Poet. The revolution she initiates is a necessary option to alleviate the plight of the masses exploited by their own leaders, whose stomachs as Woman says, "are made up of coded accounts, the sweat and blood of workers" (30). Student supports the point when he states "They have been eaten to the core by the syphilis of the new political cargoes ..." (5). To properly carry out her redemption mission, Student becomes the first recruit by Woman for organizing the revolution. While Woman and Student remain nameless in the play, the vagueness of their names is stereotypical and symbolizes the marginalized and faceless class. They become the representatives of the masses who have been deprived of political freedom and economic independence. It is this excessive deprivation that facilitates Woman's political mission in the play.

In *Requiem*, Woman is portrayed as the mother of the oppressed masses and one who is very much concerned with the plight of the masses. She becomes a symbol of conscientization, resistance and revolution. By making Woman the protagonist of *Requiem*, Besong seeks to incite the masses to change the structures that subjugate them in order to forge a new society based on democracy and prosperity. Besong seems to believe that such a vision can be actualized only through appropriate leadership, which is symbolized in Woman. As Woman posits:

We must constantly look into our inner resource, fortified by persuasion and appeal to the masses against the *beni-oui-oui's* in church

and state. Struggle must be our life to break the chains of the robbers, destroy their satanic institution, so that the people can govern. (5)

Eventually, through the courageous and patriotic spirit of Woman, the oppressed people, in a move reminiscent of the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution of 1789, stage an attack on the palace of Akhikrikri and sack the dictator; thus, establishing a new era of social justice for the majority. While the pattern of discourse of the group that used to control power shows that dominant position is increasingly being subverted, the manner of expression of the oppressed reveals the emerging hegemony. This onslaught by the masses on Akhikrikri and his cohorts is a vivid testimony of this point. At the end of the play, the silent majority regains their voices and can now express their sentiments. "Get down ----- thief Akhikrikri! You with your government without justice, Mandela! Freedom Amandla!" (58). With these cries of victory, Besong indicates that ultimate power rests with the people who would be victorious in the face of injustice and oppression. Like Christ whose mission on earth was to redeem mankind, Woman's mission in *Requiem* is to redeem the masses from all forms of domination and give hope to the voiceless masses. She is therefore projected as a messiah and by adapting this vision, Besong's wish, like that of most postcolonial writers, is to prove to the postcolonial people that the destiny of their society lies in their hands.

Unlike in *Requiem*, where Besong uses an individual character, imbues her with the courage and aura she needs to initiate the most needed revolution, Besong's messianic vision in *Beasts* is perceived through a number of characters including the Night – Soil – Men and most especially the Narrator. The Night – Soil – Men are at the centre of the drama in *Beasts* and they are projected as the lowliest of the earth and at some point as third class citizens. The fact that they populate the entire drama in *Beasts*, one will naturally have expected them to redeem their society, raise their social and economic status by creating their own history. Towards the end of the play, they mobilize themselves and head to confront their oppressor in his own palace. At this point, one is tempted to think that they are the messiahs that must bring hope to the already hopeless masses of Ednuoay. Unfortunately, when faced with the almighty and all-powerful Aadingingin, they demonstrate very little resistance and as such, are effaced and eclipsed by the dictator. Their inability to collectively oust Aadingingin is considered by some critics as the failure of a revolution within the context of the play, and an indication of the confirmation of dictatorship in postcolonial Cameroon. Conversely, to what obtains in *Requiem*, Besong's messianic vision is not overtly perceived in the Night-Soil-Men as in Woman.

Nevertheless, his messianic vision in *Beasts* can, to some extent be perceived through the role of the Narrator. He is described in the play as a “Pedagogue and Maverick” and his declarations are an articulation of his quest for genuine freedom and liberty. For example, Narrator warns the masses against the tactics of the oppressors and declares his intention to fight for freedom and liberty:

Beware of force crisis managers who come to you in lamb clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil-frog, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking who to devour. If you deserve counsel about your economic ulcers, we shall be glad to assist you. I thought you come here to comfort me, but now you are reproaching me and charging me with being a wicked man. Today every Ednouayan should decide whom he will serve. As for my family and me, we will serve freedom and liberty. Listen Ednuoay and remember my word. A hero goes to war to die... (90)

Narrator in this speech counsels the masses on the oppressor’s oppressive and exploitative strategies, while at the same time, proposes possible solutions out of the problem. To Narrator, the ultimate way for the masses to get out of their plight is to fight. It is for this reason that Narrator concludes that “A hero goes to war to die”. Though Narrator’s actions throughout the play, plays an important role in galvanizing and awakening the oppressed masses, he, however, fails as a messianic leader because, unlike Woman, his actions do not lead to the complete redemption of the masses and to the institutionalization of a new order as seen in *Requiem* and *The Banquet*.

Furthermore, as in *Requiem*, Besong’s messianic vision becomes very glaring in *The Banquet* through the heroic actions of Belle. In a manner reminiscent of Woman in *Requiem*, Belle is made up of extraordinary talents. She is not just at the pivot of revolutionary action in the play but is projected by the playwright as the person in whose hands the future of the masses lies. As Narrator and Woman, she is transformed by the author into the consciousness of the oppressed and downtrodden masses. Just as Christ, Belle, though a Woman puts her life at the service of her people. She is determined to lead the revolution that will liberate her people from all forms of oppression and dictatorship. The series of rhetorical questions that constitute Belle’s speech at the epilogue of the play portrays her as the conscience of her society and most especially, as the voice of the oppressed and voiceless masses of Nouayed. “What is your place in history...? How often are we prepared to speak the truth to people especially when they do not want to hear it because we are rebuking their faithfulness?... How often

are we prepared to speak the truth to people especially when they do not want to hear it because we are rebuking their faithfulness...! (229 – 230). Courage, patriotism and truthfulness are the qualities that transform an ordinary Woman like Belle into a redeemer and Christ-like figure.

From the analyses so far, one realizes that Walcott and Besong in terms of character portrayal share a similar vision. They are playwrights who create characters with extraordinary abilities that will enable them to liberate their societies from all forms of oppression. Their main characters are projected as messiahs because of their quest to redeem their societies. Their principal mission in the plays examined is to devise strategies that will lead to the complete emancipation of the pauperized masses. Even in the case where the activities of some of the main characters do not lead to an overt revolution, one sees a conscious attempt by the playwrights to project them as extraordinary humans.

Conclusion

The principal argument sustained throughout this paper is that Western religion cannot be considered a panacea for the emancipation of the colonized masses and that it remains the ‘bed bug’ that must be eradicated for the postcolonial people to enjoy cultural freedom. Like any other aspect of imperialism, it acted as a catalyst to the colonialist and their neocolonial missions of oppression and exploitation of the masses. As humanistic playwrights, Walcott’s and Besong’s visions as revealed through their messianic protagonists seem to suggest that the destiny of the postcolonial people lies in their own hands and that no matter the degree of oppression, the masses, through collective action, can always emancipate themselves from all forms of oppression, dictatorship, corruption and exploitation. Walcott’s and Besong’s dramatic endeavors, therefore, artistically recreate a redemptive individual and communal consciousness. Their wish, therefore, is that “as it was in the beginning (during the colonial era), is now (in the neocolonial era) and never should be (in the future) through the help of their own messiahs and not some illusionary Westernized concept of the Supreme Being.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. “The Novelist as Teacher” in *Readings in Commonwealth Literature*. William Walsh (ed). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.181-185
- Agbor, Sarah Anyang. *Critical Perspectives on Commonwealth Literature*. Gottingen: Saurefreiem Paper, 2010.
- Besong, Bate. *Change Waka and His Man Sarwa Boy*. Yaounde: Edition Cle, 2001.
- . *Beasts of No Nation*. Yaounde: Editions Cle, 2003.
- . *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Yaounde: Edition Cle, 2003.

- . *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*. Calabar: Centaur Publishers, 1991.
- . *The Banquet*. Yaounde: Edition Cle, 2003.
- . *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*. Limbe: Nooremac Press, 1986.
- Beti, Mongo. *King Lazarus*. Trans. Maller, Frederick. London: Heinemann, 1970.
- . *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. London: Heinemann, 1971.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Trans. Charles, A and Maria-Odilia McBride, London: Pluto Press, 1998.
- Butake, Bole. *And Palm-Wine Will Flow*. Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1990.
- . *Lake God and Other Plays*. Yaounde: Edition Cle, 1999.
- Forman, Robert. K.C. *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness*. New York: Sunny Press, 1999.
- Jones, Robert Alun. *Emile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1986.
- Karl, Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Moscow: Foreign Language Press, 1988.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Homecoming*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. London: Heinemann, 1976.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirri. *I Will Marry When I Want*. London. Heinemann, 1982.
- Oyono, Ferdinand. *Houseboy*. Trans. John Reed. London: Heinemann, 1967.
- . *The Old Man and The Medal*. Trans. John Reed. London: Heinemann, 1967.
- Scott, Coretta. *The Words of Martin Luther King Jr.* New York: Market Press, 1983.
- Walcott, Derek. *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*. New York: Straus and Giroux, 1986.
- Walcott, Derek. *O Babylon!* London: Cape, 1979.
- . *Pantomime*. New York: Ferrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980.
- . *The Sea at Dauphin*. New York: Ferrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986.
- . *Ti Jean and His Brothers*. New York: Ferrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975.

CHAPTER 5

Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Advent of Social Change in the Selected Novels of Nadine Gordimer and Nicholas Mhlongo

Forti Etienne Langmia

Post-apartheid, from a historical standpoint, is the outcome of the clash of South Africa's two political cultures; the hegemonic Afrikaner nation founded on the racialist philosophy of 'Apartheid', and the resistance against this system waged by different freedom movements that stood up for the respect of the rights and freedoms of the country's oppressed populations. The clash of these two broad political cultures seems to have produced a unique and most cherished national identity built on the quest to instill a strong sense of unity across the country's entire political, religious, and, most importantly, social spectrum. This political project upheld by the country's new dispensation derives from its realization that the apartheid period and its global history of contestations, protest and resistance have become the shared values that unite South Africans as a people called to live together for as long as the country will continue to exist. And the continuity and consolidation of this political and social supra-structure will be crystallized if the myriad of problems that were created by the previous era can be surmounted by the country's new leadership. This is where the idea of change in its wider perspective comes in given that the ANC-led government need to implement policies that will remarkably transform both the political basis of the society and the lives of its citizens, particularly the blacks.

The concept of change which is frequently used in this discussion is looked at from a broader standpoint due to the peculiar socioeconomic and political contexts of this society. On the one hand, it is used within the specificities of each instance to illustrate the government's efforts towards improving the livelihood of its once disfavored population, and to also stand for this society's break with its inglorious past. On the other hand, change as used in this discussion, also stands for the attempt at the inculcation of the spirit of nationhood in all South Africans by the government. But it is

necessary to point out that the common denominator in this duality in usage is that the former is an antecedent of the latter and both are applicable to the discussion. The meaning of democracy is borrowed from Gerhard Maré who, in “The Notion of ‘Nation’ and the Practice of Nation-Building in Post-apartheid South Africa”, looks at democracy from the South African post-apartheid perspective. In Maré’s opinion, democracy is a combination of the elements that make up the nation-building process such as political stability, economic growth and social justice guided by the important principle of equality amongst the different social strata of a nation such as post-apartheid South Africa. Thus Maré considers democracy to refer to a collective and exclusive endeavor of a people in a given society, which in this case is South Africa after the formal end of apartheid, who are given the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the bases and rules regulating their entire social life as a nation. Democracy, and particularly South African democracy, in Maré’s view, becomes the sum-total of the government’s initiatives to create the atmosphere suitable for the respect of individual rights and freedoms of its citizens, its ability to ensure equal economic opportunity to its population as well as the possibility of all to cultivate the spirit of unity that ensures social justice. Maré strengthens his view by quoting Tom Bottomore who considers democracy as an active and interactive participation of citizens of a particular nation in the formulation of the bases of the organization and regulation of their entire social life (1999:255-56).

The concepts of a nation and nationhood are drawn from the standpoints of Ernest Renan as expressed in “What is a Nation?” and Elleke Boehmer as stated in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* respectively. As such, Mhlongo and Gordimer depict the new South Africa as one that is based on what Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela described as a ‘rainbow nation’- the latter being a metaphor for a collective representation of all races in the process of rebuilding a democratic society wherein all the races existing within the South African multiracial agglomeration, like the rainbow, would maintain their respective cultures while collectively reconstructing their country from the ashes of racism and its imposed binaries. This is actually the main goal of the country’s new leadership as seen in its attempted efforts to: create access to a decent education for blacks, provide major basic social amenities to the poor, reinsert blacks into the mainstream sociopolitical life of the country, institute meritocracy and accountability, reinforce the unity and reconciliation between blacks and whites, and freedom. These salient attempts by the current leadership of South Africa’s multiracial democracy raised by Gordimer and Mhlongo are discussed from both a new historicist and postcolonial perspectives.

As portrayed in the novels of Gordimer and Mhlongo, the reinventing

of South Africa's public sphere can be considered from two broad dimensions with the first being the new leadership's initiatives towards improving the lives of its populace who had suffered most during apartheid, and the second being the conditions which this new leadership has created which now enable its once marginalized masses to reinsert themselves in the new society where both the former oppressed and oppressor relate with each other under a free social and political atmosphere.

A standardized education which seems to be one of the hallmarks of South Africa's multiracial democracy, certainly as a result of the centrality of a decent education to the country's reconstruction process, falls under the initiatives of the ANC-led government's efforts towards changing the lives of its once disfavored population. The government's actions in this domain are guided by the progressive ideology that for a country, such as South Africa, to be reconstructed such that all citizens can benefit from its immense wealth and opportunities, an appropriate and adequate education which meets the needs of a peculiar multiracial democracy such as theirs must be instituted. The reason for this may emanate from the country's apartheid history given that a degrading type of education called Bantu Education was imposed on the predominantly black population by the different racist regimes. And the emergence of multiracial democracy actually necessitates the complete reversal of this deplorable state of affairs which can only be done if the new leadership institutes a policy which prioritizes the education of blacks at very little cost. With such a vision, the financial assistance which the government gives to black students studying in universities across the country, as portrayed in Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog*, illustrated through Njomane, can be situated within the former's initiatives towards its poor black population. Such an assistance is brought out through the latter's indignation at his inability to benefit from the financial aid package the government offers to poor black students like him studying at the University of Witwatersrand. Njomane's anger stems from the university authorities' repeated rejection of his application for bursary despite the fact that he is a poor black student living in the township of Soweto. The indignant narrator, Njomane, points out that:

I stormed into the Financial Aid Office at East Campus Senate House. I just couldn't understand why I could not be granted some kind of financial assistance. The government was pumping large sums of money into the universities for needy black students like myself. I deserved that money. (2004:11)

Njomane is not happy with the attitude of the authorities of his university who do not think he is eligible for the assistance which the new

leadership offers to poor black students like him. His anger is quite understandable because the government is actually investing much money in its universities so that poor black students can study conveniently and so by refusing to grant him any form of financial assistance which is coming from the government, the character thinks his university is doing him great injustice. What is worth noting from the character's outburst is the initiative of the new political dispensation bent on creating the opportunity for black students to have a sound university education appropriate to the needs of the new South Africa. This aid scheme initiated by the government is an outstanding gesture geared at reducing the high rate of illiteracy among its black population. This aspect of the government's efforts toward the poor, therefore, is an indispensable prerequisite to the success of its nation-building endeavor given that by investing large sums of money, the government is determinedly forging ahead with its ambition to reintegrate blacks into the new social and political life of the country which had been the purpose of the struggle against apartheid. But it might be necessary to point out here that such a commendable effort is not without its shortcomings given the enormity of the task of reversing four decades of institutionalized illiteracy imposed on this targeted population. In fact, Christopher O'Reilly in *Postcolonial Literature* holds that the Soweto Massacre of 16th June 1976 resulted from black students' rejection of the debasing sort of education reserved for them (2001:41). Actually, this sort of education which was geared towards maintaining blacks at the margins is more vivid when one reads Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd's cruel reason for instituting such a sub-human educational syllabus in black schools. Desmond Tutu in *No Future without Forgiveness* recalls Verwoerd's claims who held that:

The school must equip the Bantu to meet the demands which the economic life impose on him [...] What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice? [...] Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life. (2000:16)

This is the mindset of one of apartheid's architects whose principal aim for instituting Bantu Education was to maintain the supposed inferior race at the margin with merely a basic education that could train them to remain servants to their white masters. Thus, the question which arises with the post-apartheid government's initiative is how they can hope to reverse such a large-scale illiteracy imposed on blacks by the previous political system in such a short time in power and where would the needed money come from when capital is still largely in the hands of the whites.

Similarly, in *After Tears* Mhlongo further develops this initiative by the

government, though from a slightly different perspective, when he contrasts the new South Africa with the old. The change witnessed in the country is symbolically depicted through Bafana who becomes the center of the discussion among Uncle Nyawana and his group of friends - Dilika, Zero, PP - in their interpretation of the broader meaning of post-apartheid to black South African youths. This is described in a comparison which Uncle Nyawana and his friends make between the present and the past as seen when Dilika, while commenting on Bafana's return from the University of Cape Town, tells PP, Zero and Uncle Nyawana that black students such as the latter's nephew are now fortunate because the government is giving them financial assistance to enable them study conveniently. To Dilika, this is the dawn of a new era for the South African black student and from Dilika's contrast of the present with the past, it is evident that the multiracial leadership lays much emphasis on the education of black youths. This laudable effort of the new leadership can only be appreciated against the background of what used to exist in the past and this is actually what Dilika seems to do when he points out that during the apartheid era, black students such as him were assisted by the benevolence from churches which supported the struggle of black South Africans. But this situation has now been reversed or changed with the political evolution witnessed by the country since black students such as Bafana are assisted by the government whose aim is to encourage the education of this section of the country's population who have become full citizens with equal rights and privileges as the whites. In this light, Dilika's use of contrast, therefore, illustrates the government's endeavor to create a future black middle class as well as ruling class who would be able to compete with whites who are already decades ahead of them in this respect though for very obvious reasons.

In the same light as Dilika, Uncle Nyawana's allusion to the past when he tells Bafana that "In our time we were only educated to speak kaffirkaans. That's the reason I was at the forefront of the 1976 Soweto uprising with Tsietsi Mashinini and others" (*After Tears* 2007: 17) which also brings out the endeavor of the new leadership toward the country's black youths. Uncle Nyawana's historical allusion to the reason that sparked off the historic Soweto uprising and consequent massacre goes to portray the remarkable efforts of the new leadership in its quest for a united multiracial nation. This aspect of the government's determination to foster the spirit of nationhood in black youths is inherent in Dilika's view - who, while corroborating Uncle Nyawana's view, points out to Bafana alias Advo and others - Uncle Nyawana, Zero, PP - that "these kids of today are lucky [...] Just look at Advo! Young as he is, he is already going to be an advocate" (*After Tears* 2007:18). At this level, one can say that Uncle Nyawana's allusion to the past and Dilika's comparison of the present with that past illustrate the new

opportunities that are now available to the country's once marginalized and oppressed majority symbolized by Bafana. The latter is now part of a political and social epoch which gives him both the possibility to become a partner - together with the whites - with the country's leadership in its nation-building process and the opportunity to become part of the country's future leadership when the present leaders emerging from the past would give way to a new generation. At this point, one is tempted to wonder if the ANC-led leadership can continue with this type of affirmative action educational policy when it has so much to do with money that it seems not to have in abundance. In concrete terms, the government needs to: provide houses to an unimaginable number of the once displaced, dislocated and dispossessed black and colored population; provide adequate health care and portable water to its poorer citizens; reduce the widespread unemployment and violent crime existing in the country. And these are all key areas that will require very huge financial engagement on the part of the government which does not have the much-needed capital for such projects.

A similar description of the government's effort is equally raised in Gordimer's *The House Gun* when the Professor, during the party at Motsamai's house tells Claudia, Harald and everyone present that young black South Africans living in the post-apartheid era, such as Motsamai's daughter, now have the opportunity to obtain an education which is commensurate to the needs of the new nation. To him, just like to Uncle Nyawana and Dilika in Mhlomo's *After Tears*, post-apartheid youths, such as the girl in question, are lucky since all of them are:

being born at the right time, growing up at the right time. That's the aleatory factor that counts most for us! Her father and I belong to the generation that was educated at missionary school, St Peter's, no less [...] Fort Hare. So we were equipped ahead of our time to take our place eventually in the new South Africa that needs us. Then came the generation subjected to that system euphemistically called education, 'Bantu Education'. They were equipped to be messengers, cleaners and nannies. (1998:173)

By alluding to the country's apartheid past, the Professor, like Uncle Nyawana and most especially Dilika in Mlomo's novel, is visibly making a comparison between the past and the present with respect to the choices and opportunities of careers opened to black youths in a bid to show the positive change in quality and orientation of education brought about by the advent of multiracial democracy. In this respect, the Professor's use of contrast is meant to show that blacks during the apartheid era symbolized by the Professor and Motsamai, had just one preoccupation which determined the

type of education they received. And this was the more urgent need to fight against a system whose priority was to subvert the black man in all respects.

Thus the type of education the older generation of blacks received only prepared them for the struggle against the vile apartheid system and it imposed a revolutionary culture while at the same time reducing the second generation of blacks to menial jobs which, according to the state, was commensurate with their race. But the emergence of multiracial democracy, according to the Professor, has reversed the deplorable situation as black youths such as the girl in question can now have “[...] admission to private schools, to universities, study overseas; [...] a real education equipped just in time to take up planning, administering our country” (*The House Gun* 1998:173). In other words, black youths now have the possibility to acquire a decent education either in the country or overseas, which prepares them to contribute to the reconstruction of their country. The situation painted by Gordimer is quite true in the sense that the advent of multiracial has democratized education in the country by giving the opportunity for blacks to acquire skills that prepare them for future involvement in the politics of their new nation.

Gordimer in *Get a Life* also raises the same issue where post-apartheid South Africa is portrayed as a society with new educational opportunities and orientation. This endeavor undertaken by the government is vividly illustrated in the novel when Andrian Bannerman while waiting for his daughter-in-law, -Berenice, in a restaurant, wonders about the new educational options that are opened to his grandchild and, symbolically, to the country's youths. The narrator, like those in Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog* and *After Tears*, and the Professor in Gordimer's *The House Gun* discussed above, through a historical allusion to the past contrasts the latter with the present as he brings out Andrian's major concern, and by extension, that of all South Africans, about the nature and type of school his grandchild should or would attend once he is of school-going age. Here the narrator portrays Andrian's thoughts as he sits in this restaurant wondering to himself:

What kind of school did she and his son think for their son, only a baby, still, but he supposes a changed country both made 'normal' education possible as it never was under segregation when Paul was a child, and raised now questions of choice [...] No Segregation, black and white; but boy's school or co-ed? (2005:45-46)

From Andrian's use of contrast, it is evident that the advent of multiracial democracy has brought with it the possibility for the country's youths to have what Andrian describes as 'normal education' characterized by a cross-racial mixing which was formally prohibited under the apartheid regimes of the

past he alludes to. Hence, Andrian's allusion to the apartheid past, whence the contrast between the apartheid and the post-apartheid periods emerges, brings to the limelight the fact that non-segregated schools in the country are now a reality, since the most preoccupying concern to South African parents, symbolized by Andrian, is not if their children because of their race will be admitted or not but rather which type of educational institution their children should or would attend. It is, therefore, obvious that multiracial democracy has officially buried the old question of race-oriented schools and with the former has emerged a new question of whether the country's children and youths should or would attend a gender-oriented school or co-educational institutions? Thus the choice between the types of educational establishments is now that of parents and not that of the government as of old. These examples from Gordimer's novels which show the positive advancement made by the leadership in its social responsibility towards the black youths equally reveal one sad reality of post-apartheid South Africa and this is the fact that only the children of middle-class families like those of Motsamai and Bannerman can have access to such prestigious schools whether in or out of the country. The majority of black South Africans who are in the different townships (situated at the apartheid-imposed margin) in the country cannot afford to send their children to these schools reserved for the elitist class who are at the center enjoying the spoils of multiracial democracy.

The Professor's and Andrian's views on the changed educational orientation in the country, like those of Dilika and Uncle Nyawana in Mhlongo's *After Tears*, concord with the view of the BBC South African reporter Greg Barrow in "Beyond the Rainbow" who holds that the Eastern Cape University of Fort Hare is:

South Africa's first 'native college' and a crucible of South African leadership. Its alumni include Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki's father, Govan, Robert Mugabe, Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo. Fort Hare has survived into the post-apartheid era, but today black South Africans are choosing to go to the formerly 'whites-only' universities. (1999:11)

Consequently, Motsamai's daughter in Gordimer's *The House Gun*, Andrian's grandson in Gordimer's *Get a Life*, Bafana and Njomane in Mhlongo's *After Tears* and *Dog Eat Dog* are symbols of the black South African youths who, because of the advent of multiracial democracy, can now attend other universities in the country. This change in educational orientation is a reflection of the change in the political landscape since Fort Hare, as pointed out by the Professor, was meant to educate freedom fighters

such as the University's alumni of historic figures mentioned by Barrow. But the demise of apartheid now necessitates a change of the political views of black students from revolutionary radicalism to democratic multiracial worldview and this is the objective of the new leadership.

The responsibility of the government, with regard to the issue of education, seems to reflect Mongane Wally Serote's position on the centrality of education in the country's nation-building process. According to Serote, change can only be effected by a group of informed and conscious people who have identified their common goals and objectives with respect to the needs of their nation. Such a collective endeavor, according to Serote, is the basis of democracy, and most especially, the South African democracy (qtd. in Solberg 1998:180-86). From this perspective, the government's efforts, as portrayed in the works of Gordimer and Mhlongo, seem to dovetail with Serote's views as the new leadership realizes that their country can only be reconstructed by an educated population. From a postcolonial perspective, the government's efforts actually become a means of completely abrogating the binaries of Centre/Margin, Self/Other which had been imposed by apartheid. By 'decentring' as well as 'deracializing' education in favor of the once disfavored population, the government is determined to bring the former to the democratized 'center' as well as obliterate the possibility for a future existence of such binaries on the country's sociopolitical landscape. This is a commendable endeavor for it fits into the broader picture of the ANC's fight against the Afrikaner nation and its policy of apartheid but what remains unsolved is the widespread poverty in the black community at large which does not give them the possibility of benefitting from such democratization of education.

In addition to education, the new leadership's provision of social amenities to its poor population is another significant initiative geared toward nation-building. One of such social services is the government's housing scheme which aims at providing housing for its homeless population who are predominantly blacks. In Mhlongo's *After Tears*, the government's housing scheme is symbolically portrayed through the dispute between Bafana's family and Mr. Sekoto over the ownership of the house occupied by the former. This dispute that brings out the government's efforts to house its once displaced and dispossessed blacks is evident when Bafana's mother puts up adverts announcing her intention to sell the house in order to pay the debt Bafana owes the government for having sponsored his studies through Cape Town University. Due to the advertisement she puts up, Bafana's mother ironically mistakes Mr. Sekoto for a prospective buyer when he comes to lay claim to the house. It is against this background that the government's housing scheme comes to the limelight especially when she tells Mr. Sekoto that she is selling the family house because "my two

brothers have got their new RDP houses from the ANC government in Snake Park and Slovoville and now there's nobody to live here. We've got another house in Naturena [...]" (2007:33). According to Bafana's mother, the ANC-led government has come to her family's aid by providing houses for her two brothers, and what is worth noting from this example is the new government's housing scheme which is meant to provide homes to its homeless citizens - predominantly blacks, - who had been deprived of decent housing until the emergence of multiracial democracy. From a different perspective, this example equally depicts the issue of a home as well as a sense of belonging which have always been central to the plight of black South Africans and which had always been the driving forces behind the struggle against the system that deprived them of these very essential elements of their personhood. Thus, it can be said that the new leadership's initiative in providing housing to its black citizens, is an added attempt at fostering a sense of unity and belonging, requisites in the nation-building process, in the black community.

The government's housing initiative described in Mhlongo's novel is also raised by Gordimer in *The House Gun* and *Get a Life*. In the former, the narrator brings out the government's initiative, when he explains that South Africa is still dominated by the white business class who still own much of the country's wealth which the new leadership needs in its endeavor to improve the living standards of her black population through its housing scheme. The government's effort in this direction is seen when the narrator holds that Harald cannot honor Motsamai's invitation to discuss about the former's son because "A representative of the government Housing Commission was with him, they were discussing an agreement on terms of low-interest loans that would put up walls and a roof for thousands of poor people [...]" (1998:54). The salient issue which emanates from the narrator's observation is the joint efforts of the white business world and the government as partners in the alleviation of poverty in the black communities through the housing scheme. This is a lucid indication that both parties have realized that only a joint effort of the business class and the ruling class can change the deplorable living conditions of the country's homeless citizens who are indispensable in the nation-building process. It is important to note that the negotiation between the business class, who are predominantly white, and the ANC government is the result of the leadership's inability to meet up with its financial obligation in building free low-cost houses for blacks. This is the sad reality of post-apartheid where the government's good intentions towards its once displaced, dislocated and dispossessed black and colored population cannot be adequately achieved due to the lack of capital which is still largely in the hands of whites.

In Gordimer's *Get a Life* the initiative by the new leadership towards the

housing of its once displaced and homeless citizens is highlighted through one of the main characters, Paul Bannerman and his interaction with other characters in the novel. In the novel, Lyndsay and Andrian Bannerman do not want their black servant, Primrose, to get contaminated by their son - Paul Bannerman's, - radio-active state due to a treatment of the latter's thyroid cancer. It is as a result of Paul's dreadful health situation that the government's housing scheme intended to house blacks, symbolized by Primrose, becomes evident, especially when the Bannerman family decides that "[...] she would go to her home in the new government housing scheme in the district where she was born, a house they had, in fact, helped her, with a gift of the down-payment, to build for her mother" (2005:19). In this case, Paul Bannerman's mortal health condition is the symbolic avenue through which the readers are exposed to the new leadership's initiatives towards housing its homeless citizens who are the victims of apartheid's inhumanity. This example, like that in *The House Gun*, reveals one major and outstanding characteristic common to all of Gordimer's post-apartheid novels, which has to do with the author's symbolic use of her main characters', situations to expose the major issues that characterize her country's sociopolitical evolution. This is the case with Duncan's precarious fate and Paul Bannerman's pernicious health condition, which are used as avenues to expose the new leadership's endeavor towards the section of her population whose plight has always been pivotal in the fight for justice and equality for all South Africans. These examples drawn from the works of Gordimer and Mhlongo show the significance of a home to the country's reconstruction process given that the sense of belonging which emanates from having a home in its broader sense had been one of the major causes of the fierce contention between white and black South Africans. Hence, the new leadership's efforts towards providing a home to formerly dispossessed South Africans is an important manner of redressing the crimes committed by the former regime.

This positive image which stands out from both authors' portrayal of the government's efforts in housing its homeless citizens cannot cancel the fact that much still remains to be done in this direction. In fact, Mhlongo in *Dog Eat Dog* holds the view that a majority of the former and formally dispossessed still do not have decent houses to live in with their often very large families. The extent of the problem is vividly illustrated when Njomane says that "people use the names of famous political leaders to attract the government's attention to the urgent need for housing" (2004:81-82). The reaction of the homeless is a symbolic reminder being issued out to those in power to know that the freedom they fought for so relentlessly is still far from being complete as the masses for whom these liberators fought for still living in sub-human habitations like during the days of apartheid. Through the act of naming some of the new offshoots of shanty towns after

famous figures of the historic struggle - Sisuluville, Sobukwetown, Mandela Views - the black masses seem to be reminding the new leadership that one of the important essences of the struggle for multiracial democracy is still very much a part of the new nation since shanty towns are still part of the black experience. In essence, black South Africans have re-appropriated a Home as in its political connotation but owning a house at the individual level is still to be achieved.

If Gordimer uses the precarious situations of her main characters to expose the government's initiatives, Mhlongo on his part uses his main characters and their interactions with members of their families and community - Soweto most often - to portray the endeavors of the new leadership towards her black population, as is the case in *After Tears*. In the novel, Bafana's interaction with his uncle, Uncle Nyawana, brings out another aspect of the leadership's initiative to its predominantly poor black population as observed in the welfare grants the new government offers to single parents as a means of enabling them to take care of their children. Concretely Uncle Nyawana, who may be considered in certain instances as Mhlongo's mirror on this society, tells his nephew that the former's friends such as PP and Zero, as well as most black South Africans, want to have children out of wedlock "[...] because of the child welfare system. Since it started, young girls want to have kids with any man. Then they claim the child grant from the Welfare Department as well as financial support from the father every month" (2007:92). This piece of information can be considered as a satirical depiction of the mindset of young and old black South Africans who, ironically, take advantage of their government's welfare initiatives to have children because of the financial benefit they stand to gain from a large number of children. In this instance, Mhlongo through Uncle Nyawana, thinks that some of the government's good plans for her populace most often end up producing the contrary of their intended results. Irrespective of the satirical edge to the example, what it raises, which is most important, is the fact that the new leadership is implementing all possible social welfare programs that can help in minimizing the prevalence of poverty among its black populace.

Equally satirical but symbolic is Uncle Nyawana's misuse of the disability grant which the said government gives to him, and other physically impaired South Africans, meant to enable him to buy his basic needs. The satirical edge to this example emerges when the narrator re-echoes Sis Zinhle's suggestion to his sister "maybe we should alert the government to the fact that his monthly disability grant isn't going on his medication, but to the breweries and cigarette companies" (*After Tears* 2007:94). In Sis Zinhle's view, Uncle Nyawana is irresponsible because he uses the disability grant he receives from the government that is meant to cater for his asthmatic condition and physical disability, on drinks and cigarettes, to the detriment

of his health. As in the case of the welfare grants destined to single parents, what emerges from Sis Zinhle's satirical depiction of blacks' mindsets is the efforts of the government towards its financially and physically impaired black populace symbolized by PP, Zero and Uncle Nyawana. Though the government's endeavor is appreciable, the major problem will be its sustainability in a country that still needs to convince the white business, who own the bulk of her wealth, to contribute in this sort of socialist policy.

Despite such a difficulty, the government's actions discussed so far seem to confirm Patrick Roger's view as expressed in "Accomplishing Democracy" on the real and practical meaning of democracy:

Democracy should have a vision to harnessing a nation's resources and to a well-orchestrated attack on poverty, disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, corruption, inflation [...] Democracy should have a meaningful economic impact on the vast majority of the population. (1996:9-12)

As such, the efforts of South Africa's new government, as portrayed by Mhlongo and Gordimer, may be seen as that of an emerging democracy that has a progressive knowledge of what its peculiar democracy should stand for. By creating housing schemes, providing welfare and disability grants, the new government is resolutely harnessing the country's resources in view of tackling not just poverty, health, homelessness but also social problems that could engender crimes and unemployment that are possible impediments to its vision of creating and perpetuating a multiracial nation. In fact, the government's actions, as described in the novels, show that the new leadership has realized that the concretization of democracy in a unique political environment such as South Africa goes beyond the liberation of its once oppressed and dispossessed population. In reality, the government's efforts show the complexity of instituting democracy, precisely in the peculiar postcolonial context of their country where the ANC holds political power while the economy is still in the hands of a predominantly white business class who in the past constituted the backbone of the policy of apartheid. This notwithstanding, looking at the different government initiatives one can say that the country's leadership has learned the real meaning of democracy especially from the perspective of Vernor Smith and Eduard Lindeman who believe that:

Democracy is more than a form of government. It is also a way of life, variegated and full of growth. Like every manifestation of vitality, democracy is many-dimensional. Its leeways are legion. The floor under it is food and clothing and shelter. Men well cared for of

body are not looking for pied-pipers whose music is the minstrelsy of doom. (1951:7)

Thus, the government's initiatives are meant to pre-empt any dissatisfaction that might be detrimental to its nation-building process because a once dispossessed population such as South Africa's, if not well cared for at the dawn of the emergence of multiracial democracy, can easily be manipulated by those in search of personal political aggrandizement. And from a postcolonial perspective, the efforts of the government, as observed in the works of Gordimer and Mhlongo, are well calculated moves meant to obliterate the presence or any eventual emergence of new patterns of the Centre/Margin or Self/Other binaries which apartheid-imposed economic and social disparity had created, and which may continue if the ills are not checked.

An equally salient aspect of the South African democracy which is described in the works of Gordimer and Mhlongo is the enabling ground created by the new leadership that has now given blacks the possibility of joining the country's middle class, which, hitherto, was the exclusive preserve of whites. In Mhlongo's *After Tears*, this new marker of a booming post-apartheid economy is portrayed through the novel's main characters such as Bafana, Uncle Nyawana and the latter's friends such as Dilika and PP. Concretely, as these characters drive through Soweto, Bafana, who is just back from the University of Cape Town, is amazed at the transformation his township has witnessed after a relatively short period. He realizes that his township has witnessed a drastic improvement as a result of the economic boom brought about by the emergence of multiracial democracy. Such a transformation is symbolized by Mamshangaan's changed lifestyle. Bafana, in a contrast, points out that the woman who used to be a petty trader living in a dilapidated house before the advent of multiracial democracy has suddenly experienced a change in her fortune just a couple of months after the emergence of democracy. The latter seems to have transformed her once-dilapidated house into a modern piece of architectural marvel. Mamshangaan's change of fortune is a significant indicator that democracy has brought about a certain economic prosperity to a section of the black business community symbolized by the said woman. In actual fact, the society has now given the woman and, by extension, other black business persons, the possibility to change their fortunes from petty traders who used to specialize in the sale of sheep's heads (smiley) and cooked sheep's or cow's feet (amanqina) to prosperous businessmen and women who have now joined the old as well as new wave of emerging middle class South Africans. It is important to point out that this apparent good fortune is the result of the existence of multiracial democracy which has given petty

businesses the chance to flourish unlike in the apartheid days when blacks were not very free to engage in business.

Gordimer describes a similar case in *The House Gun* with the example of Hamilton Motsamai who is now part of the country's new wave of predominantly black middle class who, according to the narrator's historical allusion to the apartheid days, "[...] were those who had always belonged, but only on the pillar and balconies from the hovels and township yards they were confined to" (1998:167). In this example, (like in that of the woman in Mhlongo's *After Tears*), Motsamai who belongs to the section of the country's population who were marginalized in the past has now emerged, with the emergence of multiracial democracy, as a member of the country's influential professional middle class who are now benefiting from the breakdown of racially-induced barriers which had forced them to the 'margins' (in the townships). The change in Motsamai's fortune is symbolized by the ostentatious lifestyles that he and other black professionals such as him now lead, observable in the sophisticated houses that they now own which hitherto was the preserve of the white upper class. When one examines this observation against the background of the narrator's allusion to the past, one can say that Motsamai is Gordimer's symbolic example meant to portray the transformation South Africa has undergone with the coming of multiracial democracy. In fact the contrast in the lifestyles of blacks during the two periods is quite obvious since Motsamai is one of those blacks, who in the past, were mere spectators on the 'margin', who could only look on while the dominant and hegemonic white upper class and 'center' enjoyed the comfort and luxury that emanated from the country's abundant wealth, resources and opportunities. Since multiracial democracy has broken down the racial barriers of the past which instituted such binaries, Motsamai, like the woman in Mhlongo's *After Tears*, is now part of those who benefit from the country's wealth and equal opportunities. It is necessary to indicate that this fictional representation of a multiracial democracy which now offers equal chances to all is not totally a realistic picture of what exist on the ground. The authors' depiction of the government's policy of Black Economic Empowerment actually seems to expose the entrenchment a new form of disparity that has emerged with the new nation. One easily notices that this policy actually promotes the emergence of a minority who now make up an elitist class of blacks meanwhile the majority of their compatriots continue to live in the shanty townships.

At this juncture, it is crucial to stress that the new opportunities blacks now have symbolized by the woman and Motsamai in the different works of Mhlongo and Gordimer, goes back to the last apartheid government of F.W. De Klerk described by Gordimer in *None to Accompany Me*. Historically, the leadership of De Klerk marked the official onset of post-apartheid with

the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the ANC as well as other revolutionary movements. This historic gesture equally created the opportunity for the reinsertion of blacks into the mainstream of political and social life of the country as illustrated by the opportunity Oupa now has to pursue a legal career after leaving Robben Island as a political prisoner. Oupa who is the clerk of the Legal Foundation is at the same time struggling to adjust to the change that is sweeping across the country's political and social arena through his desire and determination to acquire a career late in life (1994:15). It is, therefore, worth mentioning that he now has the opportunity to do so because of the negotiations observed on the political scene between the last apartheid regime and the Movement. Thus the willingness and determination that characterize Oupa's move symbolically stand for former freedom fighters' will to adjust to the new realities of the new South Africa under negotiation.

Coupled with such an opportunity now opened to the character is the enabling ground created by the ongoing negotiations which have made it possible for Oupa to have the possibility of occupying a decent house in a former white residential area. Oupa who is a proud occupant of an apartment called One-Twenty-One in a once exclusively white residential area called Delville Wood demonstrates the sort of self-fulfillment that accompanies one's re-appropriation of a home after decades of deprivation. The significance of such an ownership of a home in the life of one of apartheid's victims evidenced by his glaring display of self-fulfillment is quite vital to the understanding of the sense of homelessness that pervaded the lives of blacks under the old order. This new sense of belonging to a home is vividly illustrated when the narrator says that the moment Oupa takes possession of the apartment, he switches on the television set in the house but the latter cannot arrest his attention even though it is broadcasting a program on anthropomorphic animals whose squeaky voices are capable of attracting the attention of any viewer. According to the narrator in *None to Accompany Me*, Oupa's seemingly indifferent attitude towards the noise results from the pride of possessing something in his life which actually belongs to him. Actually, the narrator observes that Oupa's sense of belonging derives from the feeling that "[...] he was at home in these walls where only whites had lived before" (1994:55). In this case, the issue of a home in its broader sense, as already illustrated in earlier examples above, can only be better appraised through examples such as Oupa's whose happiness depicts a sort of self-fulfillment which comes with one's reconnection with an almost lost part of his identity. A home, in this case, goes well beyond the act of owning a house to that of re-appropriating a Home from a political standpoint given that Oupa's generation, like the generations before his, had experienced multiple displacement and dispossession orchestrated by

the different apartheid regimes.

This symbolism of a home is also corroborated by Rapulana's ownership of a decent house in a formerly all-white residential area. Unlike Oupa's example which shows blacks' reappropriation of home, and by extension, a long-deprived identity, Rapulana's shows that the transition in the country has promoted the emergence of a new wave of black middle-class citizens whose economic empowerment has given them the possibility of owning a decent house not just for themselves but also for their families. Rapulana, after successfully representing his people in the case against Mr. Odendaal, has moved out of Odenville "where he built a home for his family in the temporary settlement area secured, and, leaving the backyard cottage, has taken a house in a modestly affluent suburb vacated by a white couple who have left in the latest count of emigration to America or Australia" (*None to Accompany Me* 1994: 257). The symbolism of Rapulana's example, as well as Oupa's in the general picture of a new status for blacks in this changing society, lies in the fact that the racial jingoism of the past no longer has a place in this changed and changing country striving to inculcate a sense of nationhood in its citizens. One could say that both Oupa's and Rapulana's respective ownership of a house in former white residential areas is an indicator of the fact that the country has officially discarded its racist past and is moving forward in its determination to reconstructing a democratic and united multiracial post-apartheid South Africa.

These examples drawn from the works of Gordimer and Mhlongo demonstrate Lois Tyson's views about the relationship between literary works and the circulating ideology in the writer's society. Tyson thinks that while literary works expose the discourses of their times and societies, these works are equally an integral part of such discourses. Discourse(s), according to the New Historicism, is the circulating ideology in a particular society or culture which has influenced the writer(s) in his/her depiction of the society or culture in question (1999:281). In the South African post-apartheid situation, nation-building is the broader circulating ideology upheld by the nation's new leadership, and a decent education, housing scheme, welfare grants and the enabling grounds created by the emergence of multiracial democracy, as described by Gordimer and Mhlongo, are the various means used by the government in the attainment of the ultimate goal of nationhood. From a postcolonial perspective, it can be said that these examples are illustrations of the former 'margin's' re-appropriation of the new and democratized 'center' characterized by freedom, liberty and equality.

Meritocracy and accountability, as portrayed by Gordimer, seem to be the watchwords of the new leadership's nation-building efforts. These aspects which characterize the new leadership's governance policy signify the latter's determination at inculcating the spirit of national consciousness

in all South Africans who are called upon to serve the country, as well as in the masses whom these public servants represent. According to Gordimer these twin aspects of every democratic society is at the basis of South Africa's reconstruction process. A lucid example which illustrates the existence of these salient characteristics of democracy can be seen in *Get a Life* with the appointment of a woman as Minister of Justice based on competence rather than her gender. The competence of the female minister is alluded to during the celebration of Lyndsay's appointment to the Supreme Court at an old judge's house when Lyndsay tells her colleagues and friends that "I'm celebrating the minister not because she is a woman and so am I, but because she is exceptionally well qualified for the portfolio. If it had been a man with the same credentials I'd be raising my glass to him" (2005:164). In this case, Lyndsay seems to point out, not only to her interlocutors but also to the readers, the fact that the President, and symbolically the new leadership, has appointed a woman as Minister of Justice not because of his wish to satisfy the womenfolk but because he has realized that the woman is exceptionally qualified for the job.

Lyndsay, who, it is worth noting, is also a female judge-elect to the country's Supreme Court, seems to be Gordimer's mouthpiece on the issue of justice as upheld by the new leadership described in *Get a Life*. This responsibility which the author bestows on this character is noticeable when the narrator, while commenting on the said character's opinion on the democratic government's actions in relation to the female minister, declares that "[...] no-one could question the judge-elect's position on human rights" (2005:164) which, by extension, would mean that Lyndsay's view on the issue of meritocracy is a symbolic expression of Gordimer's view about the new government's democratic principles, which are geared towards the implantation of its nation-building program. So the new government, as seen through Lyndsay's observation, is more interested in promoting justice, and by extension, the spirit of multiracial democracy, because what counts most is one's capability and integrity and not one's race or gender in matters of nation-building, as would probably have been the case in the past.

The symbolic position which Lyndsay occupies in Gordimer's changing South Africa is also vividly portrayed in *Get a Life* through an equally symbolic union of the past and the present represented by the afore-mentioned characters such as the old male judge from the country's apartheid past and Lyndsay who is coming to the supreme court as a new judge representing the present political order and its governance philosophy ingrained in the country's multiracial character. This interlacing of the two historic periods and what they each stand for is quite significant within the context of a multiracial society striving towards the attainment of nationhood after decades of discord and animosity created by a nefarious sociopolitical and

economic system, whose vision to oppress the black race was frighteningly absolute. The symbolism of such a union of two apparently conflicting justice systems establishes the symbiotic relationship that exists between the apartheid past and the present democratic multiracial dispensation. This relationship, therefore, is an equally significant basis of the country's reconstruction initiative. This is to say that the South African multiracial democracy, which is inextricably linked to the country's history of racially-induced oppression and that of an ardent struggle against the latter, is an example of a convergence of her past with the present democratic system of governance predicated on non-racialism. This fusion of past and present is the foundation of the country as a 'rainbow nation' where the present needs the past that continuously acts as a point of reference in the leadership's responsibility towards its people. Consequently, the symbol of cohesion conjures a much broader symbol of the new South Africa inherent in the reconciliation of the divergent objectives these respective historical periods, represented by the two characters, signify in the much broader objectives of the new leadership. In other words, these two characters who represent two distinct historical periods can be situated within a much broader meaning of the South African post-apartheid symbolism, where they epitomize the ongoing transition and reconciliation between formerly divided groups and ideologies. From this example, it can, therefore, be said that the new South Africa is a united multiracial nation which now uses its past in its present endeavor to foster the spirit of nationhood. By fusing that past, symbolized by the old judge, and the present, symbolized by Lyndsay, the new leadership seems to be using the apartheid history of contestations in order to build a better present and future democratic South Africa.

Almost similar to the example of the two judges and the two conflicting justice systems discussed above is the case of Motsamai in Gordimer's *The House Gun*, who can be considered as one of the formerly oppressed, who, based on his professional competence now occupies and plays a central role in the nation-building process in his country. Motsamai is described as a former freedom fighter who has adapted to the changing needs of the new nation as illustrated through his contribution to the enforcement of justice as a lawyer representing Duncan Lindgard. The latter who is accused of killing his friend and former gay lover, Carl Jespersen, whom he surprises in a sexual intercourse with his girlfriend relies completely on the ability of Hamilton Motsamai to secure him a fair trial. It is against this background that Gordimer exposes the high degree of meritocracy characteristic of the new leadership and society when one of Harald's friends and colleagues informs him that Motsamai is highly competent given the number of political cases he has defended and successfully won, which, therefore, makes him quite qualified to defend Duncan, even though his crime is not politically

motivated. The most important issue to take note of is the emphasis which Harald's friend lays on the black lawyer's competence, whom he describes as eminently capable and experienced though he is just four years old in the country as a returned exile. To Harald's friend, Motsamai is an advocate in the new South Africa not because of his race and the new government's policy of affirmative action, but because he is competent to a point that he is considered as the blacks' mascot. In essence, Motsamai is the symbol of a new beginning to most blacks who were never given the opportunity, however competent, to contribute to the politics of their country, but who now have, as a result of the transformation which the country has experienced since the 1990s.

Another very important observation worth discussing by virtue of its symbolic standpoint is the fact that like in *Get a Life* the competence of a black character such as Motsamai in *The House Gun*, who epitomizes the character of the country's democracy, is held in high esteem by a white character. The white character, like the case of Lyndsay and the old judge, portrays the new South Africa, as a nation that is built on a much broader meaning of reconciliation. This is seen through those who, as embodiments of the country's past and present with its exigencies, play a direct and important role in its reconstruction. The image of such a symbiotic fusion, such as in the case of the female minister of Justice in *Get a Life*, is illustrated through Motsamai who, according to Harald's friend, is "a man who has mastered everything, all contradictions that were imposed on him by the past" (1998:40). Hence the lawyer, like the female Minister of Justice, becomes an embodiment of the country's past and present, wherein he is bent on using the experience of the past in correcting the faults and weaknesses of, not just the past but the present and future by virtue of the symbolic nature of the job both characters perform. In fact, this fusion gives Motsamai and, by extension, the female Minister of Justice the possibility of upholding justice and equality as well as contributing, in some measure, in its protection since this is the prerequisite of the country as a multiracial democracy.

In this light, it can be said that the female Minister of Justice and Hamilton Motsamai are symbols of the new South Africa as described by Elleke Boehmer in "Endings and New Beginning: South African Fiction in Transition." To the critic "with South Africans now in the process of composing a new nation, the years of decline and fall are giving way to a time of fresh starts and, apparently, reconstructive continuity" (1998:45). Borrowing from Boehmer, one would say that with the end of apartheid and the advent of multiracial democracy, the new leadership and South Africans in general as portrayed in Gordimer's novels are bent on establishing a united nation built on the precepts of democracy. In this wise, the female Minister of Justice, Lyndsay and the Old Judge, and Motsamai are symbolic reflections

of the initiative of the new government bent on a reconstructive continuity of its multiracial democracy through the judiciary, whose responsibility in the nation-building process such as South Africa's can no longer be over-emphasized. Consequently, the characters from a postcolonial perspective become symbols of former subalterns who now have the opportunity, not just to speak, but to also actively contribute to the politics of the country to which they now belong as citizens with equal rights with their former oppressors. In actuality, the female Minister of Justice, Lyndsay and the old Judge, and Motsamai typify Ashcroft et al's notion of a hybridized society as discussed in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. These characters symbolize the views of Ashcroft et al who hold that hybridity and its ramifications on everyone can be viewed as the predominant feature and contribution of the postcolonial world which enables the near-total obliteration of the binaries of the colonial past while enabling at the same time the development of new modes of cultural exchanges and growth that are not monolithic or hegemonic (1995:183).

In addition to the existence of meritocracy, post-apartheid South Africa, as depicted in *The House Gun* is equally characterized by a high degree of accountability, especially in matters of government's expenditure and investments as seen through its subsidies to the agricultural sector. Harald, through the use of a contrast, describes the equal economic opportunities now opened to all South Africans irrespective of their race or political inclinations, unlike in the apartheid era. Harald vividly shows this change in attitude when he alludes to what used to prevail in the country's past when the apartheid era was dominated by a chaotic financial management devoid of any form of accountability. The main priority of the government of the period was to maintain and perpetuate its stranglehold on the blacks and the only means to achieve this was for it to turn a blind eye on how the subsidies it gave to farmers - whites only - were managed. The government even used these subsidies as baits meant to lure and co-opt the white farmers in its crusade for racial superiority. The only security which farmers needed to have in these free-for-all farmers' subsidies was for them to be loyal and remain steadfast to the government's nefarious racist policy. It is, therefore, against this background that one understands the symbolism of the farm as an epicenter of the policy of apartheid, as noticed in its preponderance, not only in Gordimer's novels but also in most if not all South African novels set during that historical period. But with the advent of multiracial democracy, the indispensable symbol of the farm and farmers seems to have died with the system that perpetuated it since the country has witnessed a dramatic change where racism is irrelevant. The first of such transformations is the fact that blacks now own land and also have access to loans which they are supposed to account for. The second and most important thing, which was

absent in the past, is the fact that all farmers, irrespective of their race and political affinity, have to provide a collateral security in order to be eligible for subsidies and loans from the government.

In fact, Harald, who is part of the financial world, which used to promote apartheid's chaotic management, tells the black Professor and everyone present in Motsamai's house that the situation has changed completely as the new leadership has set down "New criteria for raising loans. Small grants to broaden the base of the sector, instead of huge grants to the few: all those who didn't really have to worry whether their crops grew or not" (*The House Gun* 1998:174). What is most significant about the new approach in public spending is the fact that the new leadership still lays emphasis on subsidizing the agricultural sector but without any preferential treatment destined to the black farmers. In this example, one can notice a symbolic multi-dimensional aspect of the sort of transformation the country has experienced. The first lies in the new orientation which the financial world, symbolised by Harald, has experienced as it has to adjust to the country's new political condition; and the second can be traced to the importance which the new leadership attaches to the agricultural sector irrespective of its historical symbolism.

These examples from Gordimer's novels illustrate the existence of meritocracy and accountability as common characteristics of the South African multiracial democracy. Though Mhlongo does not raise the issue of meritocracy and accountability, he together with Gordimer shows the possibility for blacks to achieve their desired goals which seem to confirm Hannah Arendt's view quoted by Homi K. Bhabha in "Introduction: Narrating the Nation" who considers the national space to stand for "'that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance' and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other 'like waves in the never-ending stream of the life-process itself'" (1995:2). Thus post-apartheid South Africa seen from the analysis above is a harmonious fusion of the personal experiences of South Africans which have become or assume symbolic dimensions reflecting the intrinsic meaning of the country's democratic character built on the principles of multiracialism, whose very essence is the achievement of the personal aspirations of South Africans as in the case of the characters who attain comfortable positions in their democratic nation, and those who now have the possibility to contribute individually and significantly to the maintenance of justice and equality.

These fictionalized portrayals of the efforts of South Africa's democratic leadership towards the betterment of the country's once disfavored groups seem to reflect the contemporary realities in the country where the ANC-led government has and is implementing policies meant at improving the lives of its citizens, especially the once dispossessed groups. This link between

the authors' representation of government's efforts in their respective novels and what exist on the ground in the country is established through the similarity between these representations and the view expressed by Kevin Durrheim in "Attitudes towards Racial Redress in South Africa." The critic holds that the ANC government has made considerable efforts at reversing the incidence of apartheid's legacy on those who were once its victims. In this light, Durrheim opines that:

The primary vehicle of redress has been a series of policy and legal innovations by which government has sought to either compensate the victims of apartheid or to 'designated groups', including black people, a competitive edge [...] Concretely, these policies have included programmes of reconstruction and development (investing in housing and schooling in historically disadvantaged areas) [...] and a series of affirmative action-type policies (affirmative action in education and employment [...]). The rationale for these policies is that they will increase the representation of black people in decision-making structure and in fields of endeavour, and will eventually eradicate the legacy of apartheid inequality. (2010:31)

Durrheim's opinion on the government's efforts towards its once disfavored population – predominantly blacks – dovetails with the respective stance of Gordimer and Mhlongo as illustrated in this discussion. Hence the authors' description of government's efforts in the field of education as in the case of Njomane, Bafana, Motsamai's daughter, Andrian Bannerman's grandson; social amenities such as the housing scheme, welfare grants; meritocracy and accountability as in the case of Motsamai, the female minister of justice are all efforts of the government to either compensate victims of apartheid or improve the well-being of the black population which suffered most during the apartheid era. These examples from the novels are government's efforts meant to gradually and progressively eradicate the legacy of apartheid inequality.

Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin. Eds. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Barrow, Greg. "Beyond the Rainbow". *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*. Eds.
- Porteous, Tom, Gail Jammy, Jeff Phillips, Lance Bellers, Robin White, Karen McCririck. Kent: BBC World Service, July-Sept 1999, Vol 10, 3, pp 11-16.
- Bhabha, K. Homi. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation". *Nation and Narration*. Ed. K. Bhabha, Homi. London: Routledge, 1995, pp 1-7.
- Boehmer, Elleke. "Endings and New Beginning: South African Fiction in

- Transition." *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970-1995*. Eds. Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp 43-56.
- Durrheim, Kevin. "Attitudes towards Racial Redress in South Africa." *South Africans' Social Attitudes, 2nd Report: Reflections on the Age of Hope*. Eds. Benjamin Roberts, Mbithi wa Kivulu and Yul Derek Davids. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010, pp 31-42.
- Gordimer, Nadine. *None to Accompany Me*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- . *The House Gun*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- . *Get a Life*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.
- Maré, Gerhard. "The Notion of 'Nation' and the Practice of Nation-Building in Post-apartheid South Africa." *National Identity and Democracy in Africa*. Palmberg, Mai (Ed.). Cape Town: University of Western Cape, 1999, pp 232-44.
- Mhlongo, Nicholas. *Dog Eat Dog*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004.
- . *After Tears*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2007.
- O'reilly, Christopher. *Postcolonial Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration*. Ed. K. Bhabha, Homi. Ed. Nation and Narration. London: Routledge, 1995, pp 8-22.
- Roger, Patrick. "Accomplishing Democracy". *West Africa: The Pan Weekly*. Eds. Nwagboso, Maxwell, Demond Davies, Kola Adesina, Chris Ejimofe Katherine Davenport and Nana Yaa Mensah. London: West African Publishing Co Ltd, Dec.1996, no. 4128, pp 9-15.
- Smith Vernor, Thomas and Eduard C. Lindeman. *The Democratic Way of Life*. New York: The New American Library, 1951.
- Solberg, Rolf. "Interview: Mengane Wally Serote". *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970-1995*. Eds. Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp180-86.
- Tutu, Desmond. *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. London: Garland Publishing, 1999.

CHAPTER 6

Triple Marginality in Cameroon Anglophone Literature

Kenneth Toah Nsah

This paper wrestles with the issue of marginality in the globalized/digitalized context within Cameroon Anglophone literature. It holds that there is a triple marginality inherent in Cameroon Anglophone literature which needs to be urgently redressed/reversed. This is because we live in an era wherein constantly innovating information and communication technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized all spheres of human life levelling hitherto rough terrains and yet opening more confrontational zones and dichotomies. The main thrust of the paper is that this triple marginality is discernible at the international/continental, national, and intra-group levels. In fact, Cameroon literature—both Cameroon Anglophone and Cameroon Francophone literatures—is marginalized on the African and world literary landscape; within Cameroon literature, Cameroon Anglophone literature is also marginalized; and within Cameroon Anglophone literature, some writers equally suffer from complexes of minority and marginalization. Within the context of both African continental (and by extension world) and Cameroon literatures, Cameroon Anglophone literature is relegated—consciously and/or unconsciously—to the marginal sphere according to the postcolonial dichotomy of center/margin (Ashcroft et al 1995:86). Huggan (2001:20) designates this sort of marginality as an “oppositional discursive strategy”. The third form of marginality identified within Cameroon Anglophone literature is authorial marginality (see Dvigubski, 2012: 3; Bradatan and Craiutu, n.d.:4) which Labang (2012) refers to as “academic gangsterism”. It is by studying arenas of African literary exhibition such as African Literature Association (ALA) annual reports, reviewing related literary scholarly documents and citing some literary artists that the paper buttresses and illustrates its arguments. After mapping out the said problem of triple marginality, we proceed to identifying and/or suggesting possible measures aimed at reversing the trends.

Graham Huggan’s notion of marginality and Ashcroft et al’s concept

of postcolonial dichotomies jointly inform the arguments in the paper. Consequently, it suffices to shed some light on marginality here. Because the definition of this concept is too broad, it would be appropriate to focus on the aspects that are central to this paper. Everett Stonequist remarks that a marginal person is “one who is poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds, reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds; one of which is often ‘dominant’ over the other” (qtd. Bradatan and A. Craiutu, n.d.). Building on Stonequist’s definition, Bradatan and Craiutu hold that “‘marginal’ thinkers or texts are those that are neither altogether forgotten nor perceived as being worthy of sustained academic and public attention” (ibid). For Germani marginality is “the lack of participation of individuals and groups in those spheres in which, according to determined criteria, they might be expected to participate” (qtd in Ngwira 2013: 3). In a similar manner, Yung Young-Lee asserts that in the process of marginalization “Centres are created within margins; margins are also created within centres” (ibid). The International Geographical Union (IGU) (2003:2), cited by Gurung and Kollmair (2005: 10), defines marginality as “the temporary state of having been put aside of living in relative isolation, at the edge of a system (cultural, social, political or economic), [...] in mind, when one excludes certain domains or phenomena from one’s thinking because they do not correspond to the mainstream philosophy.”

From the foregoing, it emerges that marginality includes forced exclusion, lack of recognition and even indecision among people, places and ideas/philosophies; marginalized people, places and ideas/philosophies are caught between worlds and are usually deprived of existing and exercising their functions where and when they rightfully and morally ought to. This is where postcolonial dichotomies set in, especially that of center/margin, main/sub, east/west, and canon/sub-standard. Marginality embodies perpetual, mutual confrontation as centers are created within margins and margins within centers—margins strive to become centers thereby turning previous centers into margins. Let us turn now to the elaboration of various levels of marginality within Cameroon Anglophone literature.

Triple Marginality in Cameroon Anglophone Literature

Marginality in Cameroon Anglophone literature is quantified as triple because it is discernible at three levels—the international/continental, national, and intra-group levels. Each of these levels of marginality will be discussed below.

Where is Cameroon Literature in Africa and in the World?

At the international level, to an extent, Cameroon literature—both Cameroon Anglophone and Cameroon Francophone literatures—is marginalized on the African and world literary landscape. However, it is worth noting that this marginalization is much more pronounced in relation to Cameroon Anglophone Literature given that Cameroun Francophone literature (Cameroon literature of French expression, with names such as Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Patrice Nganang, Léonora Miano, Calixthe Beyala, among others) alongside literature from other Francophone African countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal is considerably visible in some African literature departments in the western world, especially African literatures in French. Cameroon is strategically located between west and central Africa where she enjoys membership in many sub-regional organizations, but her literature is “vibrant but [somehow] invisible” (Tande 2009: n.p.) within Africa (and the world at large). Nevertheless, this is more applicable to Cameroon Anglophone literature than to Cameroon Francophone literature. Literary giants like Ghana and Nigeria in the west, Kenya in the east, Egypt and Algeria in the north, and South Africa in the south overwhelmingly dominate Cameroon literature on the continental and international levels. Internationally acclaimed literary scholars have often tended to neglect and marginalize Cameroon literature in their academic publications. In recognition of this fact, Tande, although referring more or less to Cameroon Anglophone literature, contends that this literature has been treated “as an appendix to Nigerian Literature!” (2009). He also cites some prominent scholars of Cameroon literature such as Bjornson, Buma-Kor and Bate Besong who have either perpetrated or underscored the early treatment of Cameroon Anglophone literature as an appendix of Nigerian literature. To borrow from Moradewun Adejunmobi in “The Labours of the ALA Critic: Worldly, Writerly, Activist” (2015), who argues in defense, recognition and promotion of the African Literature Association scholars, one would say that: “In practice, many works of art by [Cameroonian] artists and artists of [Cameroonian] descent are excluded, occasionally for justifiable reasons, but much more frequently for unjustifiable reasons. [...] Somehow and repeatedly, the authors from [Cameroon] are left out [...] in the supposedly global accounting of world [and African] literature...” (pp. 4-5).

The African Literature Association (ALA)—the organizational hub of African literature especially in English and French languages—paradoxically serves as a place of both visibility and invisibility for Cameroon literature. In spite of Joyce Ashuntantang’s commendable effort of publishing a bibliography on Anglophone Cameroon literature in the *ALA Bulletin* of 2004 (See Ambanasom, 2008:1), the ALA 2014 Newsletter covertly displays the marginalization and/or invisibility of Cameroon literature at the international

level. In this newsletter, the list of African literary writers and scholars who passed away within the last decade (2004–2014) includes only six Cameroonians, namely Mongo Beti, Francis Bebey, René Philombe, Hilarious Ambé, Bate Besong and Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh (African Literature Association Newsletter, 2014:10–11). It excludes/forgets/marginalizes Linus Asong, Kenjo wan Jumbam, Ferdinand Oyono, Mbella Sonne Dipoko, and a host of others who passed on within the same decade. The marginalization of Cameroon literature that this act depicts is further compounded by the fact that the same newsletter lists Hilarious Ambé and Bate Besong under two date entries. Under 2008, they are entered in descending order as Hilarious Ambé and Bate Besong and under 2006 they are entered in horizontal order as Drs Bate Besong and Hilarious Ambé. The undecided nature of these two entries is symbolic of the minority and undecided position of Cameroon literature in Africa and in the world. Regardless of the fact that these two scholars are both from Anglophone Cameroon, the fact that they are two in number seems to suggest the dual nature of literature from Cameroon—Cameroon Anglophone literature and Cameroun Francophone literature. Where then is Cameroon literature in Africa and in the world? This literature, including its writers and scholars, loiters on the margins of African and world literatures.

Cameroon Anglophone Literature: A Bourgeoning Literature in Search of a Market Place?

“If gold rust, what then will iron do? For if a priest be foul in whom we trust/ No wonder that a common man should rust. . .”

—Geoffrey Chaucer

If Cameroon literature as a whole, albeit arguably, is marginalized or rendered invisible, what then will Cameroon Anglophone literature do? Within literature from Cameroon. Cameroon Anglophone literature is also marginalized; Cameroon Anglophone literature is, consciously and/or unconsciously, pushed to the marginal sphere according to the postcolonial dichotomy of center/margin (Ashcroft et al 1995:86). Such is the marginality that Graham Huggan designates as an “oppositional discursive strategy” (2001:20). Evidence of Cameroon Anglophone literature’s marginal and marginalized space on the Cameroonian literary landscape abounds. In 2008, Ambanasom, using Ashuntantang’s 2004 publication of a bibliography on CAMLIT in the ALA Bulletin, sought “to convince any doubting Thomas of the wide range of Anglophone Cameroon literary productivity” (ibid). And in 2009 Joyce Ashuntantang landscaped postcoloniality, showcasing the production and dissemination of Cameroon Anglophone Literature (Ashuntantang 2009a). In the same 2009, Patrice Nganang identified and

decried literary apartheid in Cameroon, stating that

An intellectual crime is being committed in our country: that of segregation against Anglophone Cameroon Literature. The crime is unfolding before the very eyes of our national intellectuals, with our consent as stakeholders and, often spurred by our most respected, yet conniving francophone intellectuals. (Nganang, 2009: n.p.)

Nganang is a Cameroonian from the Francophone background and his assertion qualifies him, arguably, as an apologist and ambassador of Cameroon Anglophone literature. Unfortunately, it seems Nganang's indictment of the Francophone Cameroonian intellectuals for the literary crimes against Cameroon Anglophone literature has not had its intended positive effects on the said literature. Otherwise, how can one explain the fact that Gabriel D. Segallo's "Cinquante années de littérature camerounaise [...] cinquante années de progrès?" cites close to a hundred Francophone Cameroon writers and only three Anglophone Cameroonians, namely Mbella Sonne Dipoko, Bole Butake, and Linus Asong? Curiously enough, this paper was published in 2011, two years after that of Nganang.

Still in 2009, Dibussi Tande acknowledged the peripheral/marginal position of Cameroon Anglophone literature by qualifying it as a "vibrant but invisible" (2009: n.p.) literature. Tande further revealed that most internally acclaimed literary scholars of African Literature have often tended to neglect and marginalize Cameroon/Cameroun literature in their academic publications. He contends as follows:

When Albert Gerard was editing European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa, Anglophone Cameroon was omitted. In a last ditch effort to save the situation, Stephen Arnold wrote a basic account of Anglophone Cameroon literature titled "Emergent English Writing in Cameroon" and it was included in the collection as an appendix to Nigerian Literature! In the same vein, Richard Bjornson's seminal work on Cameroon, *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and National Experience* barely makes mention of writers from Anglophone Cameroon. Although the book contains 528 pages and Bjornson's research references are up to 1988, Bjornson only devotes less than twenty pages to Anglophone Cameroon Literature as a whole. (Tande 2009: n.p.)

Despite arguments by some scholars like Kashim Ibrahim Tala that, by 1988 when Bjornson published his work, very few books existed on Cameroon Anglophone Literature, the above excerpt is clear evidence that Cameroon

Anglophone literature is marginalized both within and without Cameroon. This is probably why Oscar Labang affirms that “[Cameroon Anglophone Literature] can comfortably be classified under Minority Literature. The definition and the very nature of this literature justifies this position” (2012: para 2). It is worth recalling that this literature suffers from inconsistency in nomenclature and definition too. In terms of name, it is often referred to as Cameroon Anglophone literature or Anglophone Cameroon literature. That notwithstanding, the focus of this paper is not the nomenclatural and definitional debates around this literature. For the sake of clarity and in order to avoid the nomenclatural debate, this paper has settled on Cameroon Anglophone literature.

Following the above discussion, it can thus be ascertained that Cameroon Anglophone literature is marginalized within Cameroon/Cameroun literature. Cameroon Francophone Literature and its scholars do impose themselves as a centre for the margin of Cameroon Anglophone literature. Drawing on Tande’s assertion that this literature is “vibrant but invisible”, one can add that it is a fertile but unadvertised and under-researched literature. Some earlier indications of the marginal position of Cameroon Anglophone literature can further buttress this point. Stephen Arnold (qtd Jumbam, 2006) had referred to Anglophone Cameroon, including her literature, as “the orphan of the Commonwealth”. Ashuntantang (2009b) and Gomia (2012) also quote Butake and Lyonga as having pointed to the same marginal position of this literature in an issue of ABBIA in 1982. Later, Buma-Kor (1993: 7) would describe it as “the literature of the hunchback.”

Authorial Marginality within Cameroon Anglophone Literature: Locating the Missing Authors?

Jung Young-Lee, mentioned earlier in this paper, notes that in the process of marginalisation “Centres are created within margins; margins are also created within centres” (qtd. Ngwira, 2013: 3). This hints at the deconstructive and confrontational nature of the very concept of marginality. This explains why within Cameroon Anglophone literature some writers equally suffer from labels of minority and marginalization. This form of marginality identified within Cameroon Anglophone literature is known as authorial marginality, and we dare call it intra-literary marginality. It suffices to note here that authorial marginality is a global phenomenon in literature and art. Bradatan and Craiutu define it as the “marginality of an author in relation to the mainstream” (n.d.:4). (Also see Anna Dvigubski, 2012: 3). Oscar Labang (2012) refers to it as “academic gangsterism”. For Labang (a committed Cameroon Anglophone literary critic, writer and publisher), “academic gangsterism” which cripples Cameroon Anglophone literature is an “attitude which presupposes that you belong to the academia

to have your work read and interpreted by a scholar" (2012: n.p.). Borrowing from Félix Guattari, he further describes it as "power signs which massacre desire", specifying that "[academic gangsterism] massacres the desires of the writer who does not belong to the academia, as well as massacres the desires of readers who look to academic scholars to recommend beautiful works to them for consumption" (ibid).

This attitude and its rather unconscious proponents have often side-lined, forgotten, neglected and marginalized (albeit sometimes even established) great/promising literary works simply because their authors do not belong to the academia or are not friends/acquaintances of academic scholars. Scholars who display this attitude "have either turned to academic gangsterism or have given up the supreme task they took or have simply remained parochial" (ibid). This brings back Nalova Lyonga's "aesthetics of victimization" (qtd. Labang 2012) to the forefront of Cameroon Anglophone literature—not in the political direction but in that of scholarly and authorial marginality. The victims of this practice are many. Let us turn to Labang again who surmises that "This means that Mathew Takwi, John Ngongkum Ngong, K.K. Bonteh and the host of other playwrights [or writers] do not know how to sing their own songs" (ibid). If it were not for some dynamic and committed Cameroon Anglophone literary scholars and critics, then often-marginalized/-neglected Cameroon Anglophone literary authors like Mathew Takwi, John Ngongkum Ngong, K.K. Bonteh, Sampson Nkwetatang, Nsah Mala, Lum Louisa, Oscar Labang, Dzekashu MacViban, Mbuh Tenu Mbuh, Wirndzerem G. Barfee, Eunice Ngongkum, Douglass Achingale, Gerald Forche, Dibussi Tande, Bill F. Ndi, Giftus Nkam, Ernest Veyu, among others, would be allowed to commit the abominable academic act of singing their own songs. Labang is thus right when he swears that "God [should] forbid that the writer becomes the spokesperson of his [/her] own work" (ibid).

For example, how many Cameroon Anglophone literary critics and scholars are committed to exploring and popularizing Sampson Nkwetatang's new literary genre known as "Repsy"? The answer to this question is blowing in the winds of authorial marginality and/or academic gangsterism. In addition, Nkwetatang himself asserts that "There are no 'Repsodists' on this planet but [there] will be with time" (Interview in *The Ngoh-Kuoh Review*). And the time to stop or reverse the direction of these undesired winds, as we argue in this paper, is now.

Reversing the Triple Marginality within Cameroon Anglophone Literature

The disturbing situation of triple marginality diagnosed in Cameroon Anglophone literature constitutes an academic and literary ulcer that needs immediate and urgent scholarly treatment. This implies that the time to reverse/eliminate the triple marginality within Cameroon Anglophone

literature is here and now. Irrespective of the fact that some Cameroon Anglophone literary scholars and critics like Joyce Ashuntantang, Dibussi Tande and Oscar Labang have variously suggested ways out of this literary dilemma, the process of completely redressing the situation is still on-going. In view of salvaging this wanting situation, the present paper proposes self-canonization, the creation of more and good publishing channels, the promotion of more online and international presence of Cameroon Anglophone literature, and the promotion of more literary awards and academic conferences/symposia.

The Need for Self-Canonization/Literary Apologists

In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the lizard is noted to have boasted that if it jumped down from a tree and no one applauded for it, it would applaud itself. The point we draw from this wise saying is that Cameroonian literary scholars and critics should not fold their arms and wait for foreigners to explore and publicize Cameroon Anglophone literature and Cameroon/Cameroun Literature. Our scholars and literary students should take up their rightful roles of singing the songs of Cameroon Anglophone literature and spare its creative author the shame and abomination of singing their own songs (Labang 2012). Full scholars and critics should do so in their personal scientific publications while research students should prioritize Cameroon Anglophone literature when choosing research topics for their academic dissertations whether in Cameroon or abroad. The latter can and should also do so in their collaborative scientific publications. From deconstructive and postcolonial perspectives, it is high time we understood that there are no canons in literature; and if canons must exist, we do not have to let others decide our literary canons. If the decision by Cameroonian scholars (literary scholars and critics, but not writers themselves) to canonize and prioritize their own literary works (through both interdisciplinary and comparative approaches) can be labelled as self-canonization, then so be it. Such scholars will be really committed and responsible in their duties, at least in the opinion of the present author Labang (2012: n.p.) refers to this type of scholars as literary apologists, affirming that "No Minority Literature [like Cameroon Anglophone literature] can survive without apologists. It needs critics who are dedicated to writing, commenting, reviewing and critiquing this literature in [order] to give it currency in the literary market place" (ibid). He further adds that

Literature exists when people read it, mock it, play with it, evaluate it and celebrate it. When I talk about dedicated individuals, I mean people who love this literature for the sake of the literature and not out of need for promotion in academia, or to achieve a

particular political goal or as a favour to a colleague, or need for friendship. (ibid)

We are in dire need of literary apologists who will self-canonize Cameroon Anglophone literary works and showcase them in the world market of literature for further analytical consumption and posterity. Otherwise, the strong currents of globalization will annihilate this literature and further marginalize it.

The Need to Create Appropriate Publishing Channels

One of the major factors responsible for the marginalization of Cameroon Anglophone literature on the national, continental and global levels is that Africa as a whole and Cameroon in particular are devoid of commendable publishing channels. Many renowned scholars of Cameroon Anglophone literature have identified this problem. For instance, Patrice Nganang—cited in Ashuntantang’s interview with Dibussi Tande—has “argued that Cameroonian literature does not belong to Cameroonians because the copyrights to major Cameroonian literary works are owned by European and American publishers” (Tande, 2009: n.p.). In the same interview, Ashuntantang stretches this issue beyond copyrights and metaphorically declares that “As long as foreign publishers remain the mid-wives of our stories, they will keep determining the nature of these stories” (ibid). Inasmuch as we keep delivering our literary offspring in foreign maternities, our children will have foreign hair and identities; we will always be obliged to edit our stories, plays and poems to fit foreign editorial policies and tastes. To a large extent, this is detrimental to our literary advancement. Ashuntantang, however, cautions that “no one is an Island—[Therefore] a viable partnership is the way forward. Local publishers have to network with foreign publishers for wider distribution” (ibid). Such partnerships will confer multinational statuses on our local publishers like Langa RPCIG, Miraclaire LLC, Editions Clé, and others. We cannot and should not forget that—to borrow from Ashuntantang once more—“African literary works published by multinational companies are disseminated internationally and so the works also receive international acclaim, while works that are published and disseminated locally do not get known widely no matter how good they are” (ibid). There should also be strong connections and cooperation between book dealers in Cameroon, that is, writers, publishers, booksellers and readers.

Similarly, the Cameroon-born poet Nsah Mala has explored publishing hurdles faced by Cameroonian writers in his poem “Publishing Conundrum” published in his most recent poetry collection *If You Must Fall Bush* (2016). In the foreword to the collection, Michael Suh Niba elaborates the issue

further. He writes that

...unfortunately Cameroonian authors [and researchers] have a problem because they do not have publication channels. In most cases their works take so much time to be published so much so that they are accused of plagiarism which the poet creatively terms the accusation of 'adultery and fornication'. Those involved in publishing in Cameroon only care about producing textbooks for the syllabus thereby marginalising creative writers [and researchers]. This sense of frustration which Mala expresses is a sentiment that other Cameroonian writers like Joyce Ashuntantang and Oscar Labang have also explored. (pp. xvii-xviii)

Louisa Lum, in the afterword to Nsah Mala's collection, joins Suh Niba to affirm that "There is also a focus on the difficulty of publication by Cameroonian authors since most local publishers prefer to publish textbooks that will sell in the national school system" (p. 107). The hunt by Cameroonian local publishers for publishing textbooks to fill booklists contributes to marginalize Cameroon Anglophone literature (as well as scholarly publishing). Publishers should cease to act as predators on writers, confiscating and/or co-owning their copyrights and promising royalties on book contracts that are never paid. We need to move beyond vanity publishing in our quest for the proper dissemination of our literature.

In the present digital era where open access, open education and open data are overwhelmingly gaining grounds, this problem becomes much acuter. In this era, more than ever before, "Every minority literature needs journals, reviews, newsletters, blogs and notebooks dedicated to the publishing of any "Trash" [write-up] written about this literature" (Labang, 2012: n.p.). Although Cameroon Anglophone literature can boast of some open access journals, that is, the *Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture (JELLiC)* run by the Cameroon English Language and Literature Association (CELLA) and the *Cameroon Journal of Studies in the Commonwealth* run by the University of Douala, *Epasa Moto* run by the University of Buea, *Syllabus Review* run by The Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaoundé, and the *Journal of Human Rights*, initial publishing outlets on the literature such as *The Mould*, *The Mongo Review* and *Palapala* have drowned in the seas of oblivion. Even the KIF/Miraclaire monthly poetry reading (café) that blossomed a few years back is nowhere to be found. Positively, Cameroon Anglophone literature currently counts one review (The Ngoh-Kuoh Review), one online magazine/e-zine (Bakwa Magazine at <http://www.bakwamagazine.com/>), a couple of blogs (Cameroon Literature in English at <http://www.anglocamlit.blogspot.com/>, George Ngwane at

gngwane.com/, Scribbles from the Den at <http://www.dibussi.com/>, Batuo's World at <http://www.joyceash.com/>, and Nsah Mala's Literary Creations at <http://www.nsahmala.blogspot.com/>) and one personal journal (La Bang at <http://www.la-bang.org/>), but it needs more of such publishing channels to ensure its sustainable dissemination. This will constitute a milestone in the reversal of the triple marginality inherent in this literature.

The Need for More Online and International Presence

It has been mentioned earlier in this paper and in the works of other Cameroon Anglophone literary scholars that Cameroon Anglophone literature is not very present on the Internet. Oscar Labang, for example, has noted that our literature is “so conspicuously absent” and/or “insignificantly present on the techno-media landscape” (2012). This rather uncomfortable reality is partly blamed on the fact that many Cameroonian literary writers still excessively venerate their works; they overly believe that the worth of a work is solely/largely dependent on its venue of publication and are afraid to publish/share their works online. Social media, online journals and reviews, blogs, e-zines and other online sites provide excellent and promising channels for the dissemination of our literature. Whether or not we are afraid of publishing/sharing our literary works online, electronic literature (e-lit) and the digital humanities are thriving and we will soon be running after them the way we are currently scrambling for the digitalization/internationalization of education. And we will not want to ask this question, who (in Cameroon Anglophone literature) is afraid of the Internet?

While the digitalization of our literature already entails its internalization and dissemination, forging strong partnerships between our local publishers and foreign ones stands a great chance of ensuring the international/global availability of Cameroon Anglophone literature. Some of such promising partnerships include selling books via Amazon and other online bookstores as well as Langaa RPCIG's marketing partnership with African Books Collective (ABC) in the UK and Michigan State University in the USA. Such initiatives can create a larger space for Cameroonian literature on the international literary landscape and undo the tags of marginality and invisibility attached to this rich literature.

The Need for More Literary Awards, Conferences and Symposia

Literary awards, honors, prizes and gatherings like conferences and symposia are great avenues for motivating and popularizing literary production and encouraging literary scholarship. Unfortunately, these motivational and scholarly endeavors are lacking in Cameroon. In fact, at the time of writing this paper, there were only two literary awards/prizes in Cameroon Anglophone literature namely the EduArt Award and the Eko Foundation/

ACWA Award (see Labang 2012). Apart from the Kashim Ibrahim Talla Annual Lecture (KITAL) which opens the Cameroon English Language and Literature Association (CELLA) annual international conferences, there is no other regular literary/scholarly gathering on Cameroon Anglophone literature that we can cite. In the past, the participation of Cameroon Anglophone literary artists and scholars in the African Literature Association (ALA) annual conferences was not quantitatively impressive compared to that of artists and critics from other African countries. However, this trend has begun changing positively, especially since 2010, witnessing a commendable growth in popularity and visibility. For instance, many Cameroon Anglophone literary scholars and artists attended the 2015 Bayreuth ALA Annual Conference. They included Bole Butake, Charles Ngiewih Teke, Joyce Ashuntantang, Gilbert Shang Ndi, Victor Gomia and Irmagard Anchang Langmia amongst others. During the Bayreuth ALA conference, Bole Butake was given proper recognition (It is worth noting that he is one of those Cameroonian literary writers and scholars whose works have attracted international acclaim especially in Kenya and other parts of Anglophone Africa thanks to his connection with Eckard Breitingner, another unmistakable name in Anglophone Cameroon literary criticism). Following the death of Bernard Fonlon in 1986, the ALA instituted the Fonlon-Nichols Award in 1992 and has been awarding it since 1993 to “an African writer for excellence in creative writing and contributions to the struggle for human rights and freedom of expression.” This award honors Bernard Fonlon who was one of the foremost scholars and promoters of both Cameroon and African literatures, cultures and languages. Despite these strides, much still needs to be done to enhance the visibility and popularity of Cameroon Anglophone literature within the ALA and other literary circles. This situation demands urgent attention if we want our literature to thrive and to quit the marginal spaces into which it has been flung through negligence and other factors. Labang (2012), succinctly captures this urgency as follows:

As a minority literature, [Cameroon Anglophone literature] needs writers’ associations [not only Anglophone Cameroon Writers’ Association, ACWA], literary interest groups [not only CAMLIT Yahoo Group], genre associations/clubs, and literary pressure groups to carve out avenues for its propagation [...] It [also] needs awards and prizes, honours and rewards. It needs conferences, symposia, readings, writers’ meetings, cafés, discussions and workshops. (Labang 2012: n.p.)

The above is an urgent clarion call that we must heed attentively and immediately in order to reverse the triple marginality of Cameroon

Anglophone literature.

Conclusion

This paper set out to discuss the issue of marginality of Cameroon Anglophone Literature within the global/digitalized context. It has proven that there is a triple marginality inherent within Cameroon Anglophone literature which needs to be urgently redressed/reversed. This is because we live in an era wherein constantly innovating information and communication technologies have revolutionized all spheres of human life, levelling hitherto rough terrains and yet opening up more confrontational zones and dichotomies. The main thrust of the paper has been that this triple marginality is discernible at the international/continental, national, and intra-group levels. Indeed, Cameroon literature, that is, Cameroon Anglophone and Francophone literatures, is marginalized on the African and world literary landscape; within Cameroon literature, Cameroon Anglophone literature is also marginalized; and within Cameroon Anglophone literature, some writers equally suffer from complexes of minority and marginalization. Within the context of both African continental (and by extension world) and Cameroon literatures, Cameroon Anglophone literature is, consciously and/or unconsciously, downgraded into the marginal sphere according to the postcolonial dichotomy of center/margin (Ashcroft et al, 1995:86). Graham Huggan (2001:20) designates this sort of marginality as an “oppositional discursive strategy”. The third form of marginality identified within Cameroon Anglophone literature is authorial marginality (see Dvigubski 2012: 3 and Bradatan and Craiutu, n.d.: 4) which Oscar Labang (2012) refers to as “academic gangsterism”. I have dared to call it intra-literary marginality. The paper has examined arenas of African literary exhibition such as African Literature Association (ALA) annual reports, reviewing related literary scholarly documents and citing some literary artists in order to buttress and illustrate its arguments. After mapping out the said problem of triple marginality, we have concluded the paper by identifying and/or suggesting possible measures aimed at reversing the trends.

By treating Cameroon Anglophone literature vis-à-vis Cameroon literature as a whole, this paper has also shown that the former literature cannot be completely dissociated from the latter one. The fate of both is intricately bound together. Joyce Ashuntantang shares this opinion when she observes that “Understanding Anglophone literature only helps in understanding Cameroon literature as a whole” (2009a: n.p.). Otherwise, as she continues, we would only talk about African literature and never mention Cameroon or Nigerian literature. Moreover, does the existence of Yoruba studies or Igbo studies threaten Nigerian or African literature/studies?

In view of the above, this paper adds its author's voice to those of other proponents of Cameroon Anglophone literature to neutralize unfounded claims propagated by detractors of Cameroon Anglophone literature in Cameroon, that is, those scholars and politicians who are bent on suppressing the Anglophone/Anglo-Saxon identity, including that of Cameroon Anglophone literature and the English language. That "nationalist" school of thought which purports that by advocating for a distinct "minority Anglophone Cameroon literature" separate from the general Cameroon literature, Anglophone Cameroon writers, scholars and critics are inadvertently locking up Anglophone literature in a literary ghetto is baseless and domineering. Diversity is a strength, not a weakness.

Works Cited

- Adejunmobi, Moradewun. "The Labours of the ALA Critic: Worldly, Writerly, Activist" (2015), in *African Literature Association Newsletter*. Sept. 2015. (2)1 4-5. African Literature Association (ALA). *African Literature Association Newsletter*. June 2014 (1)1.
- Ambanasom, Shadrach. "Half A Century of Written Anglophone Cameroon Literature" (A keynote address at the occasion of the EduArt Literary Awards Night at Capitol Hotel Buea) July 18, 2008. 1 – 23. Web. http://www.eduartawards.org/files/ambanasom_50_years_of_anglophon_literature.pdf. Accessed 21 January 2015.
- Ashcroft, Bill et al. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Ashuntantang, Joyce (a). "Joyce Ashuntantang: Foreign Publishers Determine the Nature of our Stories (Interview)" Interviewed by Tande, Dibussi June 13, 2009. Web. <http://www.dibussi.com/2009/06/joyce-ashuntantang-foreign-publishers-determine-the-nature-of-our-stories.html>. Accessed 25 January 2015.
- b). *Landscaping Postcoloniality: The Dissemination of Cameroon Anglophone Literature*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2009.
- Deeh Segallo, Gabriel. "Cinquante années de littérature camerounaise...cinquante années de progrès?" in *Afriques*, n.d. Web. <http://mondesfrancophones.com/espaces/afriques/cinquante-annees-de-litterature-camerounaise%E2%80%A6cinquante-annees-de-progres/>, Retrieved on 22 January 2015.
- Gomia, Victor N. *Mobilising the Hordes: Radio Drama as Development Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2012.
- Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Jumbam, Martin. "Professor Porter on Cameroonian literature (Part Two): Fonlon was an outstanding human being" (Interview). 2006. Web. http://www.martinjumbam.net/2006/07/professor_porte.html/ Accessed 02 January 2017.
- Labang, Oscar. "Anglophone Cameroon Literature: The Travails of a Minority

- Literature” in *Bakwa Magazine*, 2012. Web. <http://bakwamagazine.com/2012/03/07/commentary-anglophone-cameroon-literature-the-travails-of-a-minority-literature/> Accessed 22 August 2015.
- MacViban, Dzekashu. “Anglophone Cameroon Literature: An Appraisal”. October 2014. <http://www.goethe.de/ins/cm/en/yao/kul/mag/lit/20438652.html>, Accessed 27 January 2015.
- Mala, Nsah. *If You Must Fall Bush*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2016. Nganang, Patrice. “Literature Apartheid in Cameroon” trans. from French by Emmanuel Ndeh Avwontom. n.d. Web <http://www.dibussi.com/2009/05/literature-apartheid-in-cameroon.html/> Accessed 22 August 2015.
- Nkwetatang, Sampson N. “Anglophone Cameroon Writer Invents New Literary Genre: Interview with Sampson N. Ngwuekie” in *The Ngoh-Kuoh Review*, n.d. Web. <http://thengohkuoh-review.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/interview.html/> Accessed 25 April 2017.
- Nsah, Kenneth T. “Black Prophecies on White Soils and Ears: A Reading of Joyce Ashuntantang’s ‘The Clairvoyant’” in *Modern Research Studies: An International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, pp. 502-514, 2015. Web. <http://files.hostgator.co.in/hostgator201172/file/2015020308.pdf/> Accessed 02 Jan. 2017.
- Tande, Dibussi. “Cameroon Literature in English—Vibrant but Invisible”. n.d. Web. <http://www.dibussi.com/2009/03/cameroon-literature-in-english-vibrant-but-invisible.html/> Accessed 22 August 2015.
- Teke, Charles N. “Straddling Borders in Postcolonial Discourse: Delocalisation (Displacement) and Reconstruction of Literary Theory in Africa” in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2013, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 169-184. Web. <http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/462/492/> Accessed January 2017.
- “Final Report Summary – CAMLIT (Perpetuating Cameroon Anglophone Literature: A Critical Reading of Selected Works)” 2015. Web. http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/173994_en.html/ Accessed on 02 January 2017.

CHAPTER 7

Ayi Kwei Armah and the Pan-African Quest for an Ethical Future

Gilbert Shang Ndi

The African writer, Ayi Kwei Armah has uninterruptedly produced engaging creative writings spanning more than half a century. His novels include *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Fragments* (1969), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), *The Healers* (1978), *Osiris Rising* (1995), *KMT: In the House of Life* (2002) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013). Though his works are based on a wide gamut of thematic issues, one of the seminal features of Armah's novels is his persistent attempt at re-imagining the sociocultural and political life of African societies based on ethical values and human dignity. In his representation of postcolonial power systems as a legacy of colonial power relations, Armah's work constitutes a forceful struggle against the colonality of power, a concept which Anibal Quijano defines as the reconfiguration of power relations in former colonial societies on models of European capitalism and Eurocentric cultural ethic (2008:188). Thus, Armah's representation of political power is based on a deep-rooted subversion of the cultural fragmentation ushered in by the individualism and capitalistic greed that characterize colonial and postcolonial exercise of political power. This chapter examines the dynamics and artistic modes through which his novels¹ instigate an ethical re-thinking of African political spheres and the dignity of the African self. It argues that Armah's imagination of an "ethical turn" in African society and politics is posited on the primacy of individual self-interrogation and introspection as the pre-condition for a collective re-foundation of African sociopolitical ethos. Secondly, his representation of a possible ethical future is premised on a critical consideration of memory, indispensable for the re-invention of the past, the interrogation of the present and the radical envisioning of the future. The article equally reconsiders the structural exigencies imposed by Armah's ethical and pan-Africanist artistic vision and how they influence the narrative configuration of his novels, most of whom are considered by

his critics as “iconoclastic” (Ogede 2000: 3) with regard to the contemporary appeal of postmodernist critical protocols.

Armah’s creative engagement and pre-occupation with sociopolitical reality have known different articulations depending on the overriding motif in each of his novels. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Armah sets the tone of a near fatalistic disillusionment with the political situation of Africa at the dawn of independence. In the text, social and political events are reflected through the deep moral choices and dilemmas of the man and Teacher, the two characters whose consciences still possess a moral censor in an ethically indifferent society. Both characters alienate themselves from the madding crowd and contemplate the challenges of moral sanity in a society haunted by corruption and materialism. Considered by certain critics as an utterly grim novel that offers no avenues to the future (Achebe 1975) due to its excessive usage of scatological imagery, social decay and amoral characters, *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* constitutes a key phase of Armah’s wrestling with hope/lessness. The novel’s imagery of decadence, though symbolic of disillusionment, constitutes by the same token a profound quest for change and transformation. Thus, however grounded it might seem, Achebe’s reading can be considered reductionist. Mikhail Bakhtin provides an insightful discussion of scatology in literary works in a way that can instigate a re-reading of Armah’s apparently gloomy tonality in this novel against the grain of his critical “detractors”. Bakhtin stresses that “The images of faeces and urine are ambivalent, as are all the images of the material bodily lower stratum; they debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously. They are blessing and humiliation at the same time” (1984:151). The ubiquity of fecal matter and scathing portrayal of moral and political corruption in this seminal text is at the very basis of Armah’s hope process. This process of hope cannot be satisfied through instant solutions but rather an enduring resistance against moral degeneration. Despite his sense of despair, the man desperately yearns for signs of a new beginning, considering the military putsch that topples Nkrumah’s kleptocratic regime at the end of the novel as a merely cosmetic and ephemeral solution. What he longs for is a profound and sustained re-thinking of the ethical overhaul of the Ghanaian, and by implication, African polities. As his colleagues rush out in a commotion to witness the “change” of government, the man is not enthused by the seemingly dramatic break that the coup heralds:

The man felt completely apart from all that was taking place. He would like to know about it, but there would be plenty of time for it, and he was not burdened with any hopes that new things, really new things, were as yet ready to come out. Some day in the long future a new life would maybe flower in the country, but when it

came, it would not choose as its instruments the same people who had made it a habit of killing new flowers. The future goodness may come eventually, but before then where were the things in the present which would prepare the way for it? (159-160)

The man does not give in to popular sensation and the spirit of the time for he perceives the change as precipitated, eventful and not based on a patient and insightful consideration of society's ailment. Though the moral decline of the society is dismal, any claim of redemption has to be adequately scrutinized to avoid the repetition of the errors of history. In this way, Armah's text presents a political revolution that is not accompanied by careful elaboration of a new ethical approach to politics as a recipe for failure and the compounding of memories of disillusionment and betrayal characteristic of abortive transitory moments in African history. Though the yearned for moment of real change does not seem to materialize in Armah's first novel, the quest for "beauty" constitutes the underlying leitmotif in Armah's later works which are built on the clarity of his moral voice and the lucidity of his perception and what Eustace Palmer aptly considers as Armah's characteristic "moral earnestness" (1972:129), brought to live in his texts through metaphorical density.

Armah's *Why are we so Blest?* (1972) marks a decisive orientation of his creative anxieties and quest for change towards a Pan-Africanist vision unfettered by national identities. While his earlier novels are set in Ghana, *Why are we so Blest?* is mainly set in the Maghrebian Republic of Afrasia, a country that has recently attained its independence after a bloody revolution. However, instead of providing a platform for the flourishing of new life, Afrasia turns out to be a nation of social inequality where vacuous political propaganda draws back bitter memories of bodies sacrificed for the purpose of revolution. Afrasia becomes an appropriate stage for narratives of deception where Armah's prototypical maimed souls gather to mourn their desolate fate. These include the writer/translator Solo, and a Harvard-educated African intellectual Modin who is denied membership in the exiled government of an African country fighting against colonialism. It is precisely through Solo's introspective ruminations that the deep sense of disappointment with post-revolutionary life attains ample articulation:

I have had large dreams and I have learned not to speak again of their death. But that the small, harmless hopes should also have crumbled into nothing. That is so cruel. I had hoped – accepting that I am forever the rejected spume – I had hoped still to be able to hold something beautiful in the life that is left, much as an isolated drop might in itself capture the light of the sun in a rainbow that

does not arch over great distances or last any great length of time, but still in its shrunken round self contains an image of the larger beauty. (*Why are we so Blest?* 11-12)

Through a dexterous use of internal monologues and stream of consciousness aesthetics, Armah takes us through the psychological trauma of his central character. The elusive nature of ethical wholeness is captured by reference to “the light of the sun in the rainbow” and “round self”. These symbols of wholeness are redolent of the “flowers” in *The Beautiful Ones*, a symbol that is perpetuated in Armah’s myth-oriented novels through the imagery of an oval shaped object of Ancient Egypt, “the Ankh”, representing concepts of beauty, equality and justice. Solo finds it difficult to bear the contradiction of the post-revolutionary State against its promise of a new dawn. His agonizing probe into the self reflects the quest for the union of personal credo with the societal ideal, a re-echo of the man’s contemplations in *The Beautiful Ones*. Even as a stranger in the Maghrebian country, Solo is shattered by the price paid for a revolution that ends up serving just the interests of a predatory political elite. Each time he goes back home after work, the accusing eyes of the young beggars sicken his soul. The scenario of the “loved one” in *The Beautiful Ones* is brought back to life in this text. However, the pan-African dimension is more clearly expounded in *Why are we so Blest?* While the man’s “loved ones” in his earlier novel refer to his wife and biological children, Solo’s are orphans of war in a country that he embraces thanks to his Pan-African spirit. When he asks them about their parents, they respond matter-of-factly «*Mon père? Il est mort* » (My father? He died) (15). Solo becomes a constant benefactor to the orphans, offering them money each time he meets them on his way home. The accusatory eyes of the little children convict him, filling him with a sense of guilt and reminding him of the necessity to unite their childhood dreams with a social commitment for the construction of a livable society. Solo is agonized by the fact that hypocrisy to one’s self and to the society has become the basis of a ruthless sociopolitical and economic realism in African political dispensations, the bedrock of corruption. In an ironical tone, he insinuates that:

Our times demand from us just one great observance: that we should pretend. To live well now means to develop as highly as possible the ability to do one thing while saying, and preferably also thinking, another thing entirely. The successful livers are those with entrails hard enough to bear the contradiction and to thrive on it. Then there are those who for some inexplicable reason want to bring what they do and what is done around them into the same territory as what they think and what they dream. These are losers,

life's failures. (*Why are we so Blest?* 14)

This is an image of a society where moral values offer no attraction for those who want to “succeed”. Solo, like most of Armah’s prototypical characters, is in constant quest for an ethical existence, engaged in the difficult and idealistic task of connecting professed credo with human individual actions and collective interactions. His idealism is at variance with the pragmatism of the society as is the case with most of Armah’s “life’s failures”, ironical reference to morally minded characters who attempt to lead a life underlined by moral convictions. A principled and practical resistance to corruption is considered as cowardice and madness. *Why Are We So Blest?* is central to Armah’s creative production in that it marks a threshold in his series of novels post-primarily preoccupied with a diagnostic probe into Africa’s sociopolitical, economic and (most importantly) cultural ailments.

In Armah’s later novels, the morally scrupulous characters are no more presented in their near-suicidal solitude that to a certain extent impairs their actual effectiveness in fighting for change. Rather, Armah’s new moral voices are re-figured as members of Pan-African groups working together for the ethical redress of the society. The stream of consciousness technique in his later texts presents moments of philosophical meditations that do not end in moral dilemmas within the character’s self, but whose self-reflexive broodings rather yield pro-active social actions in the direction of contributing to change in their society. The new breed of “beautiful ones” is not totally void of rigorous self-interrogation, but is systematically endowed with a firm resolution and the formation of a mythical will which enables them to face the odds of corrupt established authorities. After the obsessive in-scapes into the troubled mindset of the man, Baako, Solo and Modin in his earlier novels, Armah’s imagined “beautiful ones” are represented less as fragmented selves of a postmodernist type, and more as internally resolved characters that overcome their internal contradictions to effect tangible moral actions. Such characters are represented as symbolic epigones of Africa’s moral heroes and defenders of personal and collective justice. They constitute the lifeline of Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), *Osiris Rising* (1995) and *KMT: In The House of Life* (2006) as we shall see in the discussion below.

Two Thousand Seasons can be described as a textualized oral record of black African history, Africa’s encounter with European slave traders and the struggles led by conscientious Africans to prevent the moral degradation of the society. It represents a creative probe into the continent’s *longue durée* history in order to recover traces of principled resistance against a conjunction of endogenous and exogenous transgressions of societal ethos in the face of cultures of materialism that characterize the slave trade and colonial eras. The moral idealism of this text intensifies a “character divide”

whereby unscrupulous and materially minded characters are pitted against heroic figures struggling against the decline of both individual and institutional integrity. Members of “the way”, a group of characters who resist slavery, are placed against society’s “destroyers” who collaborate with the slave masters. The first group pursues justice, equality and dignity while the latter group is constituted of myopic characters guided by the exigencies of carnal desires and instant material gains. While mercantilistic local chiefs are more interested in building networks with the European slave merchants, members of “the way” engage in tangible teamwork with like-minded Africans to combat the evil of slavery and stem the moral decline of the society. They become Armah’s alter egos and vehicles for his vision of rebirth and regeneration. As a major characteristic of Armah’s Pan-African vision, the names of his heroes grant them a wide resonance across African societies. They include characters like Isanusi Naita, Makaa, Ndlela, Ashale, Kamara, Soyinka, Kisa, Kakra, Okai and Badu. When some of the members of “the way” (e.g. Isanusi, Naita and Maaka) are killed by King Koranche and his European collaborators, new members like Soyinka and Kisa step in their place to continue the fight for freedom and justice. The Voice that narrates the last chapter of the text harnesses one of the main ideas that run through Armah’s entire artistic creation and echoes traces of both his initially apparently pessimistic texts and the later more optimistic ones: “Easy it is to fall into the trap of loneliness if we forget that our people are not just of the present, not just the walking multitudes of murdered souls and zombies now around us, but many more gone and many, many more to come...” (203). An important element of this text is the ability of his moral protagonists to build mutually supportive companionships, a clear evolution from the lonely and internally fragmented characters of his earlier novels. In accordance with its parting shot that “There is no beauty but in relationships...” (206), this text stresses the strength and value of relationships premised on the construction of a communal ethos. In this positive re-membrance of African history, self-interrogation of characters is harnessed with the formation of a group ethic that constitutes the strength of the morally conscious characters to regenerate and renew themselves and their society.

A major criticism of *Two Thousand Seasons* resides in its Manichaean opposition of the villains and heroes and the portrayal of African ills as exogenous. Ogede underlines the fact that Armah’s greatest strength is also his greatest flaw - “Too frank to overlook the murky issues that more tactful writers tend to ignore politely, Armah has not only the daring to stare steadily at the seamy side of life but also the power of voice to attempt to catch, reflect, diagnose it” (2000:2). This frankness can sometimes miss out on the ironies and intricacies of human society. Thus, in spite of the strong symbolic prowess of *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah’s perception seems to be

too rigid and at pains to capture the ambiguities of a rather complex history of slavery and colonialism. The novel thus comes off as schematic when placed in tandem with a work like Ahmadou Kourouma's *Monnè, Outrage et Défis* (1990), that provides a more nuanced interpretation of the colonial encounter and the cracks evident in the African societies even prior to the advent of the white slave traders. What is undeniable, however, is the fact that externally induced corruption and the divide and rule strategies of the slave economy and the ensuing colonial politics account for the magnitude of the ravages of the slave trade on African societies and the fragmentation of African personality. The imaginative re-invention of this personality through fiction has constituted what can be described as Armah's literary project.

Armah's vision of the future can be aligned with ontological hope in the virtuous dimension of man. Ernst Bloch defines this form of hope in *The Principle of Hope* as the "expectant counter-emotion against anxiety and fear, it is, therefore, the most human of mental feelings and only accessible to men, and it also refers to the furthest and brightest horizon" (1986:75). While *Two Thousand Seasons* is based mostly on a re-enactment of hope through a historical imagination, Armah's later novels strike a balance between history and myth in narrating the possibility of and hope for an ethical revolution. This is the case with *Osiris Rising*. Through myth, this novel enacts a revival that would lead to a progressive and just Pan-African society. The chapters of the novel are titled according to ancient Egyptological deities/virtues, insinuating the construction of the African society on the basis of ethical ideals, some of which are incarnated in Egyptological tradition. This novel illustrates Armah's imagination of political sphere as a space for the struggle between competing ethical dispensations. The novel centers around the rivalry between two former colleagues Seth and Asar over the love of Ast, a former study mate to both of them. The three characters stand for the Isis myth of Ancient Egypt that represents the constant struggle between Good and Evil in human society. Seth uses State power in his capacity as Deputy Director of Security to lure Ast into a relationship with him, promising her State protection and a government job worthier than her post as lecturer in the University College of Manda. To woo Ast to his side, Seth refers to Asar and his colleagues as a subversive terrorist group whose main aim is to bring down the State of Hapa and plunge the country into anarchy. The rivalry culminates into the assassination of Asar. In representing the murder scene, Armah's narrator meshes the materiality of violent power politics with the paradoxical possibility of spiritual rebirth. Though the killing of Asar appears as a victory to Seth from a worldly perspective, Asar's death is a sacrifice for the spiritual regeneration of the society. At the time of the assassination of Asar, his wife Ast is pregnant, a reality that can be paralleled to the birth of Horus by Isis in the original Isis myth on which Armah's text is based.

The possibility of transcendence/regeneration is also suggested through one of the images that run through a number of Armah's novels: the boat. After Seth shoots down Asar, the boat on which the latter had been sailing is left afloat: "The Deputy Director of Security gave no orders concerning the empty little boat adrift. He ordered the security patrol yacht to be taken back to base" (*Osiris Rising*, 305). The boat remains intact, preserving its capacity to ferry Ast's spirit unto the world beyond. This can be contrasted to a similar symbol of the boat in *The Beautiful Ones* which brings both moral and financial ruin to the man's family. The man's wife is enticed by the prospects of a fishing business initiated by Koomson, the government Minister of Culture. The man smells corruption in the whole affair and resists the deal while his wife Oyo is lured by the gleam, the prospect of getting rich in defiance of a too scrupulous husband. The boat scheme ironically brings about the financial ruin of the family and the symbolic downfall of the man as he ends up unknowingly eating of the fish that is gotten from this business scheme. The second figuration of the boat in *The Beautiful Ones* occurs when the military takes over the government and the barons of the old regime are on the run. Koomson, the government minister is ferried across the river to neighboring Ivory Coast. Aware that Koomson is a fugitive minister, the boatman demands more than the usual fare for his service. The boat is, therefore, a recurrent image in both texts but with contradicting moral connotations. While in *The Beautiful Ones* it is couched in imageries of corruption and decay, the boat in *Osiris Rising* is a medium of transcendence and regeneration of virtue in spite of the political dispensation headed by president Utombo and his phallogocentric security chief Seth. Osiris' continuously floating boat can be figured as a vessel or trope for the possibility of the re-making and re-constitution of life after apparent death given that in the Isis myth, Osiris' body is finally remembered by Isis.

In another dimension, Armah's vision is portrayed through the dreams of his characters which make *Osiris Rising* a deeply psychological novel. It must, however, be said that dreaming in *Osiris Rising* is not a mere unequivocal moment of resolution and optimism. Rather, dreams in this text are most often portrayed in the form of nightmares underlining the immense difficulties that Armah's "beautiful ones" would suffer in the hands of the political authorities in the course of envisioning an ethically based society. Yet, the impediments to the dreams are not wholly insurmountable as can be deduced from the ending of *Osiris Rising*. Ast's dreams underline the difficult pre-conditions for the construction of a just society. At the beginning of the text, she dreams about the imminent destruction of Asar by Seth and his accomplices:

She saw Asar off on the first of humanizing journeys, carrying not

weapons of destruction but ideas to support new life, images to feed the love of universe. From a world awakening, she fell down the abyss of Seth's intoxicating deception, the destruction of Asar. Bereaved in the soul, she followed her namesake in preserving sorrow, saw her raise the fruits of years of patient effort, and learned to contain sorrow for the murdered, using the energy of mourning to build new strength for future achievement. (8)

The dream preempts the imminent pitfalls of her spiritual quest including the painful and tragic loss of her love, Asar. Unlike dreams characteristic of utopian visions, Ast's dreams sometimes paint a picture of a *cul de sac*, a puzzling predicament. Perhaps it is Armah's consciousness and acknowledgment of the difficult (but not wholly impossible) task of Africa's regeneration against the odds posed by both internal and external factors. Ast (Isis) and Asar (Osiris) do not waver in the face of human obstacles, attempting to unite forces and to perpetuate the work of social construction. The mythical dimension with which Armah invests his characters grants them the moral stamina to withstand even the most challenging impediments, underlining the power of myth to inspire a model of ethical possibilities that are difficult to handle within purely realist or historical novels. However, the authorial vision represented in this text constitutes a kind of structural biases with regard to the moralistic division of characters. In reference to Armah's "post-Beautiful Ones" texts, Derek Wright equally regrets the author's recourse to didacticism to the detriment of a refined form and character complexity characteristic of his first novel, that is hard to find in the later novels of the author (1989:284). Though this opinion is emitted before the publication of *Osiris Rising* (1995), it is nonetheless true of this text. While virtuous characters like Ast and Asar are invested with a historical mission and a mythical will, the "worldly" characters are presented in caricatural forms, lacking wholeness and complexity. To a certain extent, the malicious characters are instrumentalized into supporting roles as necessary obstacles to showcase the ideological stamina of the "beautiful ones". The rather "message oriented" passages of the book impair the construction of dialogue in the novel and interrupt the natural flow of an otherwise creative re-appropriation of the Isis myth.

Armah's "mythical novels" do not completely eschew history. Rather, African historical memory provides Armah's narrative with inspiration for the imagination of an ethical revolution. A key aspect of this is the re-membering and re-memberment of African historical figures, victims of neocolonial intervention in cahoots with power-hungry African leaders. Armah makes explicit allusion to figures like Patrice Lumumba and Steve Biko in *Osiris Rising* (1995) and in *KMT: In the House of Life* (2002),

respectively, through a combination of anagrams and identifiable historical contexts in spite of their fictionalization. The Pan-African members of the Ankh (Ast, Asar Moko, Duma, Lamine Djatta, Kojo, Ndiaye Kamara and Maanan Djan) in *Osiris Rising* are represented as ideological companions of “Pace Humba”, the young nationalist leader of Hapa, assassinated by President Utumbo and his foreign allies. Bailey tells Ast:

At independence, a patriot talked of helping make a society where people would share everything, benefits and pain. His people loved him. The Americans, Germans, British and French called him a communist and had him killed. They put hired assassins at the helm of the government. Since then the business of this government has been to grab commissions for the cheap sale of natural resources, to embezzle state funds...” (130)

Added to the anagramic undertones of the names, the contextual collocation of “Pace Humba” and “Christian Utumbo” as major figures of the post-independence political space in the fictional Republic of Hapa is reminiscent of the violent history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country whose colonial and post-independence fragmentation can be considered as an open wound on the conscience of Africa and humanity. “Pace Humba” falls prey to a vicious alliance between the ambitious Utombo and neocolonial powers. Though Pace Humba dies, he continues to inspire strongly convicted revolutionaries across the continent. Armah re-figures him as a historical companion to his “beautiful ones” whose vision of justice and equality constitutes an imperative ethical resource that needs to be re-enacted and nourished by present and future generations. In his intellectual biography, *The Eloquence of the Scribes: A memoir on the sources and resources of African Literature* (2006), Armah underlines his admiration for the ideals of the historical Patrice Lumumba when he talks of: “The rise of another attractive African who wanted democracy in African society in place of the European oppression, neglect and poverty. Lumumba’s charisma was based on a message of great intelligence and beautiful honesty (2006:16).

The re-membering and re-memberment of historical figures along a Pan-African ethic of social and political regeneration is continued in *KMT: In The House of Life*, undoubtedly a protraction of *Osiris Rising* in both its structural and thematic aspects. Both texts are based on the Pan-African vision of the Per Ankh (which stands for The House (Per) of Life (Ankh)) and constitute epistemic responses to the challenges of re-membering the fragments of a dismembered memory (*KMT*: 12). In *KMT*, Lindela, the central character, suffers from a sense of helplessness and remorse over the expulsion and eventual suicide of her mate, Biko. Biko’s sole crime is his

persistent rebellion against the unjust structures of the oppressive system in a fictive African country. For many years after Biko's death, Lindela suffers spiritual crisis, tormented by the cowardice and the inability of Biko's (including her) classmates to defend him against the oppressive system (*KMT*: 11). However, she considers the appropriation of Biko's legacy as first and foremost a personal obligation. After suffering a psychological crisis as a result of a mindset of guilt, she resolves to "link dreams with the possibility of action" (11) and to pursue the "paths of remembrance" instead of the "superhighways of forgetfulness" (12). The memories of Biko live on through the re-constructive work of Lindela and her fellow companions of the House of Life like Jengo, Djiely Hor, Ast Konate and Maty. With regard to both Lumumba and Biko, some critics might consider as problematic the idealization/mythologization of figures who equally had human flaws and whose early death made it difficult to imagine or foretell their future leadership style given the realities of power. The equivocal legacies of Ghana's Nkrumah and Guinea's Sekou Touré point to the need to understand the complexity of leadership personalities at the time of African independence. However, literature constitutes a form of dream operating against the backdrop of an unappealing sociopolitical reality. The visions and youthfulness and Pan-Africanistic dimension of such historical figures as Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and Steve Biko constitute a major creative source in literary tropes of social transformation.

Armah's forceful and symbolic aesthetics of re-imagining the future calls for a number of observations. Foremost in his creative imagination is a conception of future from a *longue durée* perspective of temporality. This accounts for the constant shifting from realist, historical to mythical temporalities in his novels, a culmination evident in *Osiris Rising* and *KMT*. In his fictions, revolutionaries who are demotivated by lack of instant transformation are presented as opportunistic and spiritually febrile, easily daunted and discouraged by the enormity of the task of revolution. Endurance constitutes an inalienable element of ethical re-awakening and the characters who embark on the task of rebuilding Africa without adequate preparation, diagnosis and profound understanding of her cultural and spiritual ailments are bound to fail. This explains the pertinence of internal monologues and stream of consciousness techniques in his texts that grant the reader access to the tortuous mind-formation and maturing processes of a pan-African revolutionary spirit.

In another dimension that is related to the question of temporality, Armah's re-imagination of the temporality of the African revolution makes him move away from a pre-occupation with the political sphere unto the realm of culture. Unlike political formations that are based on quick expedient strategies and expectations of instant gains, the development of a

cultural mindset which Armah imagines can only be the fruit of a prolonged, long-drawn and mature internalization of cultural and ethical norms. In *Remembering the Dismembered Continent* (2010), Armah posits that

Culture is a process, not an event. The promotion of culture requires a regular process, not a haphazard scattering of spastic shows. The development of culture depends on a steady, sustained series of supportive activities whose primary quality is not a spectacular extravagance but a calm continuity. In that respect, culture has much in common with all of life: human life, the life of beasts, the life of forest and field plants. For more of the vital, life-sustaining processes are steady, constant, unspectacular. Sometimes, they are so unspectacular the careless vision may miss them altogether. (134)

This vision accounts for the inconspicuous nature of Armah's virtuous characters who do not seek for short-term recognition and gains, but rather focus on their duty to the future ethical society. This explains the complexity of temporal nexus in Armah's text whereby realistic, historical and mythical visions of time are mutually entangled and intercepted, giving room for a complex pluri-vocality of his texts.

The re-membling process is imagined through constant intra-textual and intertextual allusions that re-echo the voices of characters of his previous texts as well as revolutionary figures of African history. As such, reference to a "we" in his fictional universe is not based on a narrow horizontal community but rather includes a vertical and trans-temporal vision of revolutionary confraternity, englobing those engaged in the task of re-making Africa in every part of the globe as well as in every point in time. The factoring of historical voices of African revolution in Armah's vision can be underscored through the ethics of mourning and re-memberment. Re-membling is not supposed to entail mere commemorative performance or construction of monuments. Rather, re-membling is imagined as profound recognition and critical re-appropriation of the legacy and ideals of dis-membered voices in a process that would release the energy to connect with their dreams. This re-echoes the view expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Something Thorn and New: An African Renaissance* (2009) where he connects the process of re-membling with that of mourning:

Postcolonial Africa has never properly mourned the deaths that occurred in the two traumatic events in its history: slavery and colonialism. Many thousands died on lands and on the seas. Others perished on slave plantations in the world of their captivity and in colonial plantations such as the rubber plantations of Belgian

Congo. (29) [...] Out of the fragments and the observance of proper mourning rites comes the wholeness of a body re-membered with itself and with its spirit. (2009:35)

Ngugi, in the same vein as Armah, perceives the practice of mourning as a means for the emergence of an ethical consideration of the future. This captures Ast's dream in *Osiris Rising* discussed earlier above wherein she "learned to contain sorrow for the murdered, using the energy of mourning to build new strength for future achievement". Generally, one can qualify Armah's *Osiris Rising* and *KMT* as forms of mourning for the loss of incarnations of ethical earnestness. To mourn is not to be fixated on the past and to ignore the exigencies of the present and the challenges of the future. Rather, mourning in Armah's text becomes a way through which "we can purge ourselves of the negative effects of trauma..." (Ngugi 2009:57) and clear the way for a prospect of a motivating future. Armah's imagination of mourning as a forward-looking rather than a subject of fixation is similar to that expressed by David Eng and David Kazanjian, when they reflect on a politics of mourning that might be "active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary" (2003:2). It is from this perspective that the valence of his aesthetics of memory can be understood and appraised with regard to Armah's fiction.

In conclusion, one can assert that the imperative of re-imagining Africa's future is an inalienable aspect of Ayi Kwei Armah's fiction. His creative imagination constitutes a persistent engagement with the possibility of an ethico-political dispensation and a society that "should be a source of strength, not a constant drain on one's energies and self-confidence" (*Osiris Rising*, 110). This artistic vision places certain demands on his narrative choices whose schematic tendencies can be subjected to scrutiny without necessarily discounting the author's imaginative fertility and vivid rendition of his belief in the possibility of an ethical future. In effect, the burden of African history generates a narrative tradition that instills a re-reading of that same history and cultural myths of African societies as invaluable creative resources for the envisioning of an ethical future. The structural constraints that result from such an artistic project need be understood within the author's Pan-African context rather than be demanded to toe the line of literary conventions *en vogue* that are sometimes externally determined and far removed from contextual realities.

Notes

1. For the sake of space, discussions would be primarily based on *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), *Osiris*

Rising (1995), and *KMT: In the House of Life* (2002).

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Rev. Ed. London and New York: Verso, 2006.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann, 1968.
- . *Why Are we so Blest?* London: Heinemann, 1972.
- . *Two Thousand Seasons*. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- . *Osiris Rising: A Novel of Africa Past, Present and Future*. Penguin: Per Ankh, 1995.
- . *KMT: In the House of Life. An Epistemic Novel*. Popenguine: Per Ankh, 2002.
- . *The Eloquence of the Scribes: A memoir on the sources and resources of African Literature*. Popenguine: Per Ankh, 2006.
- . *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*. Penguin: Per Ankh, 2010.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986.
- Eng, David L. and David Kazanjian. Eds. "Introduction: Mourning Remains" in *Loss*. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Eds). Los Angeles: California University Press, 2003.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Something Thorn and New: An African Renaissance*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009.
- Ogede, Ode. *Ayi Kwei Armah: Radical Iconoclast*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.
- Palmer, Eustace. *An Introduction to the African Novel. A Critical Study of Twelve Books*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- Quijano, Anibal. "The Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America" in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Eds. Moraña, Mabel et al. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008. 181- 225
- Wright, Derek. *Ayi Kwei Armah's Africa: The Sources of His Fiction*. London: Hans Zell, 1989.

CHAPTER 8

Theorizing the Police State: Postcolonial Dystopia in Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman*

Eric Nsuh Zuhmboshi

The struggle for political and constitutional independence through the decolonization process, in many African countries, was aggressive and uncompromising. Notwithstanding, the entire struggle was and above all enthusiastic and optimistic because many Africans believed that with the departure of the Western bourgeoisie colonialist, they will be the ones to pilot the destiny of their countries to their tastes and predilections. In fact this outburst of optimism is enunciated by the first person narrator, in Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman*, where he comments that "The fathers of independence, those who first risked their lives to preach its coming, had described it to the crowds as a joyful holiday celebrating our arrival into an El Dorado" (57). However, the painful irony is that for more than fifty years of self-rule, the route towards an El Dorado in most African countries has not been feasible, instead, the postcolonial African masses have borne what Ali A. Mazrui (1980) calls "the cross of humiliation" from their own leaders. This utopic belief was hatched by many Africans because of the nasty experience of exploitation, humiliation, and oppression by their colonial masters. In this guise, Kwame Nkrumah argues, in *Africa Must Unite*, that the social consequences of colonialism were even more insidious than the political and economic consequences because "Europeans relegated us [Africans] to the position of inferiors in every aspect of our everyday life. Many of our people came to accept the view that we were an inferior people" (1963:32). The conditions of Africans during the colonial era caused many Africans to harbor the belief that they will be better off after attaining political independence or self-rule.

Nevertheless, the antithesis for the independence struggle is the unvarnished fact that many African states degenerated into chaos, bloodshed, and unbridled tyranny almost immediately after they gained political independence in the 1960s – a scenario which has been the trademark of the

African continent up to the present date. Beti also argues that the African population was thrown into disappointment and frustration after independence because “the crowds were catapulted into a nightmare in which they are still struggling” (Beti 57). The reasons for this postcolonial political cataclysm are wide and varied. Alex Thomson, in *Introduction to African Politics*, argues that at independence, “African political managers had not been left with suitable state capacity, nor established institutional tools” to handle the destiny of their various countries to politico-economic prosperity which “made the provision of effective government problematic” (2004: 256). He also comments that:

The departing colonial powers may have bequeathed to their successors liberal democratic constitutions, but these hastily erected pluralist institutions had been built on woefully weak political foundations. European imperial rule had usually consisted of seven or eight decades of bureaucratic authoritarianism. No political culture of democracy had been nurtured, and no tradition of political pluralism established (256).

Without refuting Thomson’s view, the political imbroglio in most African countries after independence, also arises from the fact that the colonial masters handed political power to their African stooges and sycophants whose knowledge of democracy was questionable since these colonial masters were looking for those they could easily manipulate to their interests unmindful of the detrimental effects it had on the downtrodden African masses. In this context, neocolonialism and dictatorship became the order of the day and the life-span of many comprador bourgeoisie African leaders was directly proportional to the extent to which they were supported or backed by their neocolonial godfathers and totally unconnected to how serviceable these leaders were to their citizens.

Oyeniyi Okunoye stresses that “African literature derives its relevance and utility from its responsiveness to the collective African experience”. He further argues that the form and concerns of African literary discourse “have been conditioned by the reality of the colonial engagement, either in the sense of betraying the overwhelming European presence or of asserting the African will to authentic self-expression” (Okunoye 2007:119). It is due to the sociopolitical consciousness of the African writer and his dream to see things change for the benefit of the entire citizenry that the postcolonial situation and political imbroglio in Africa has not left the African writer indifferent who considers him/herself as the voice of the voiceless and the defender of the downtrodden. In fact, the general commitment of the post-independence African writer is to expose the ills and shortcomings of these

new African leaders and also to awaken the sociopolitical awareness of the masses to stand up against such tragic crisis and failure of leadership.

Using Mongo Beti's novel, *The Story of the Madman*, this paper aims at analyzing the postcolonial conditions and welfare of African citizens after independence. Because of the highly political nature and texture of African literary writings, the investigation and assessment of the postcolonial African condition is an outstanding thematic concern in the works of many African writers. As a matter of fact, Michael Chapman, in "African Literature, African Literatures: Cultural Practice or Art Practice?" strengthens this view in his argument that there is ample reason why African literature is regarded "as a social document" and "a political act". According to him, "It is expected that the African writer address the big sociopolitical issues of the day. The writer who does not do so may end up being considered irrelevant" (2007:154). Chapman's view, shows that the interpretation of African literature cannot be extricated from the sociopolitical context of the writers, as argued by Ngugi wa Thiong'o that:

literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battlefield: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics? (1997:xi)

In other words, this paper tries to answer the question whether the majority of Africans have really and appropriately benefitted from the fall-outs of political independence or whether the postcolonial era is just a mere continuation of the colonial era with different actors albeit performing the same goals – the exploitation and subjugation of the African populace. Mindful of this, this paper is based on the postulation that in Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman*, political independence has not been of any palpable advantage to African citizens because the new leaders who have taken over the destiny of postcolonial African states seem to be worse and less performing than their former colonial masters. With the help and protection of their neocolonial masters, most post-independence African leaders, in their reign, have been the aggressors of their own people and have turned their countries into police states. In the same vein, Martin Meredith strongly purports that "Indeed, far from being able to provide aid and protection to their citizens, African governments and the vampire-like politicians who

run them are regarded by the population they rule as yet another burden they have to bear in the struggle for survival" (Meredith 688). In this connection, therefore, it is incumbent on and necessary for the African masses to rethink a second struggle for a more feasible independence and liberty.

In this regard, it is important to define what a "police state" is and how it has led to the dispossession and emasculation of the postcolonial citizen. In political theory, the concept of a "police state" has a controversial and complex history because it had no pejorative or negative connotation at the time the phrase was coined. Elise K. Tipton argues that before the 1930s, the idea of "police state" was a mere translation of "Polizeistaat" which at the time was "a technical term used to designate the type of 'regulative state' that emerged on the European continent during the eighteenth century". He further contends that "It [police state] was a state under an absolute monarch dedicated to the protection of the people, to the welfare of the state and its citizens and to the improvement of society through the rational division of labor within society and administration" (2012: 14). However, with the rise of totalitarian and autocratic regimes in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia the coinage 'police state' came to be perceived from a derogatory angle because the leaders of these regimes used the forces of law and order to suppress and curtail the freedom of the masses to prevent them from revolting against the regimes even in cases where the latter were not working for the benefit of the entire citizenry.

In context, the term "police state" has been used from the perspective of its contemporary meaning. In this regard, a "police state" will be defined as a country or state in which the civilian population is kept under tight and high-handed control by a government that seeks to limit social, political, and sometimes economic activity by the populace to a substantial degree. In its contemporary political meaning, Elise K. Tipton notes that a police state is

a government that exercises power arbitrarily through the police dominated by a political police, in disregard for the rights for citizens. It has also become a popular term of abuse applied to a wide range of regimes that differ in terms of their level of economic development, social structure and political ideology but have in common their suppression of opposition by means of a secret police. (2012:14)

Tipton's definition shows that the police state, in the modern context, is synonymous with a totalitarian state whose leader has unlimited powers and answerable to none. In such a state system, the citizens are at the mercy of the government and police brutality is accepted as the operating procedure and the norm of administration. In general terms, the theory of separation

of powers between the executive, judiciary, and legislature is non-existent in a police state or even if it exists, it is only in principle but not in practice. A typical example of a novel in the Western literary tradition that contains the vivid concept and functionality of the police state is George Orwell's novel *1984*. The authoritarian state or police state in postcolonial Africa has drastically led to the dystopia, dispossession and emasculation of the postcolonial African citizen.

Another phrase that needs to be defined is "postcolonial dystopia". Generally, the word "dystopia" which is the opposite of utopia, denotes a society in which the conditions of life are extremely horrible and pessimistic because of oppression, terror, or deprivation. It is a society in which the conditions of life are miserable, characterized by human misery, poverty, oppression, violence, disease, and/or pollution. Sharon Stevenson gives an elaborate definition of the concept of dystopia when she argues thus:

A dystopia then is more than a bad place; it is a familiar, yet unfamiliar, malevolent place where good or at least average people suffer deprivation of basic freedoms required to be fully human, and this suffering occurs at the hands of a faceless system, either social or governmental or both, that is beyond the protagonists' power to control or change (135).

In view of this paper, the phrase "postcolonial dystopia" is related to the sociopolitical emasculation and dispossession of the postcolonial/post-independence subject by the new African leaders who have taken over the mantle of political leadership from the colonialists but have behaved not too differently from his neocolonial predecessors. These new African leaders, who happen now to be the colonialists of their own people, continuously subject, humiliate, oppress, and exploit the downtrodden African masses in the same way as their former colonial masters. This view is strongly supported by Peta Ikambana who asserts that in most African countries, after independence, the citizens are trapped in the cycle of oppression, poverty, misery, and governmental mismanagement. He further argues thus:

These people [African masses] are not the primary beneficiaries of many promises made by their governors when they seize the power. On the contrary, these governors quickly become their worst nightmare, unable to fulfill their legitimate dream of better lives, in a rich continent. These governments are well known for cutting health, education, social spending, and decreasing labor protections in order to boost their military power. Africans are obliged by their own governors to live in a constant and profound economic and

social misery, while those in power are increasingly concentrating their wealth. African poverty is an outcome of the unjust acquisition of national resources by the powerful. The disproportionate movement of wealth from the people to these powerful governors is a distinguishing feature of African politics. I believe that these inequities are a necessary component of the African political system, based on the concentration of military and personal power in the hands of dictatorial regimes. (2007:257)

Ikambana's view brings out the dispossession of the postcolonial African subject and their dystopian nature. It shows that the postcolonial society has lost the purpose for which it was fighting for the independence from its former colonial masters. Instead of bridging the gap between the poor and the rich, the postcolonial leadership has further broadened the gap and created conflicting classes between the haves and the have-nots. Frantz Fanon notes that before independence, "the [nationalist] leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity" (1995:157). However,

as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in watch touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie. (1995:157)

In terms of practical criticism, the theoretical paradigm which has been adopted for the analysis of this paper is Marxist literary criticism with proponents such as Louis Althusser, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Ernst Fischer and Gaylord C. LeRoy. This approach is based on the premise that every writer has a social class and what he writes is a reflection of the values and ideology of his class. Consequently, in Marxist hermeneutics writers perceive and appreciate reality from the prism or perspective of their social class. Peter Barry argues:

All the same, Marxist literary criticism maintains that a writer's social class and its prevailing 'ideology' (outlook, values, tacit assumptions, half-realised allegiances, etc.) have a major bearing on what is written by a member of that class. So instead of seeing authors as primarily autonomous 'inspired' individuals whose 'genius' and creative imagination enables them to bring forth original and timeless works of art, the Marxist sees them as constantly formed

by their social contexts in ways which they themselves would usually not admit. This is true not just of the content of their work but even of formal aspects of their writing which might at first seem to have no possible political overtones. (1995:158)

Barry's view of Marxist criticism shows that the approach does not sacrifice aesthetic hedonism for ideological content. In fact, Fredric Jameson also sustains the argument that, for any meaningful Marxist analysis of literature to be successful and complete, form should be given equal attention as content. He buttresses his argument by remarking that, "what is more important is the influence of a given social raw material, not only on the content but on the very form of the works themselves" (1974:165).

Admittedly, Gaylord C. LeRoy affirms that the Marxist view of literature is that "while it is right to emphasize the pleasure to be derived from literature, it is a mistake to assume that the principal function of literature is to afford this pleasure and accordingly to deny or minimize the connection between literature and truth" (1977:117). In this connection, the Marxist literary approach is of vital importance in the analysis of this paper because, being inter-disciplinarily oriented, it enables a full grasp of the texts under study; borrowing from the social sciences and the humanities. Furthermore, the approach enables an intrinsic and extrinsic analysis of the novel under study since the strength of art is not only known for its ability to translate aesthetic pleasure but also in its ability to depict and reflect a given sociopolitical context.

The Francophone Cameroonian novelist and essayist, Mongo Beti, ranks amongst the most committed writers in French Cameroon and Africa in general. In fact, he is the major voice in Francophone Cameroonian literary discourse and one of the most virulent African writers against neocolonialism and postcolonial dictatorship and tyranny. The Canadian scholar, Richard Bjornson, notes that:

For Beti, neocolonialism is the oppressive system that links petty dictators and the privileged classes in third-countries with large international firms and foreign cultural interests in mutually profitable schemes that disenfranchise most people in these countries and reduce them to abject poverty. (328)

In fact, Mongo Beti, because of his critical and radical views against the Ahidjo regime, was on self-exile to France throughout the reign of Ahidjo, part of the reign of Paul Biya, and only came back to Cameroon in 1990 following the re-introduction of political pluralism in Cameroon and Africa in general. Most of his literary works especially *Perpetua and the Habit of*

Unhappiness, which is a sequel to *Remember Ruben* were banned by the Ahidjo regime for their acerbic insight against postcolonial leadership and most especially the Ahidjo administration which at this time was heavily supported and sustained by the French. While in Cameroon, he became politically active and joined the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party which until date remains the main opposition party in Cameroon. The fact that he joined the SDF party in Cameroon showed that Mongo Beti was still in the spirit of radicalism since at the time the party was the most radical and leftist at the time. In 1997, he stood for the parliamentary elections in Cameroon but was disqualified by the powers that be because he had a dual nationality which was against the laws of the state.

Beti's novel *L'histoire du fou* (1994) (later translated into English in 2001 with the title *The Story of the Madman*) is a scathing literary idiom on the betrayal of the dreams and expectations of independence by the political elite and leaders of postcolonial Africa. Beti's narratological discourse emphasizes the emptiness of political independence which, according to the narrator of the novel, has brought very little and insignificant dividends to the majority of the downtrodden Africans. This perspective permeates all the post-independence novels of Mongo Beti because he pursues the same goals that motivated his earlier anticolonial works. In "The Concept of Neocolonialism in the Later Works of Mongo Beti", Bjornson notes that "He (Mongo Beti) remains primarily concerned with the liberation of Africans from the enslavement that they have been subjected to, whether by direct colonial rule or the pseudo-independent governments that emerged during the early 1960s" (1991:137).

Worthy of note is the fact that *The Story of the Madman* is the first literary work published by Mongo Beti after the reintroduction of democratic pluralism in the roaring 90s in Africa. The novel, from the perspective of the sociology of literature, is a reflection of sociopolitical activities in Africa and Mongo Beti's immediate social context during this era. His commitment to the desperation of the postcolonial citizens justifies Richard Bjornson affirmation that Mongo Beti is "a writer with profound social conscience" who, in his writings, feels "compelled to expose the falsity of those images [of Africa] by offering a counterversion of contemporary African history as an alternative to the nation-building rhetoric of oppressive governments and the newspaper reporting that reinforced it" (1991:325). In this light, it is a truism that Mongo Beti's role, together with other francophone African writers like Camara Laye, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Mariama Ba and many others have been crucial and outstanding to the shaping of francophone African fiction.

Set in an imaginary post-independence African state, Beti's novel is a historical allegory that tells the story of a patriarch, Zoeteleu, who suffered

political victimization from successive dictatorial regimes in this unnamed fictional state after it gained independence from its colonial master. The anonymous first-person narrator of the story presents the events from an angle of severe criticism and regrets the effort made by the masses in the struggle for independence since the new African leaders are seen committing the same ills (and even more!) of the colonial master during the era of colonization. The novel, therefore, is deeply pessimistic and dystopian in nature and supports the view that political independence was a mere shadow with no palatable dividends for most of the African populace. It, therefore, captures the general trend in most African countries that degenerated into chaos after the departure of their colonial masters.

The novel opens with a note of despair where the anonymous first-person narrator gives a vivid description of a madman in an imaginary postcolonial African city. The narrator notes, in a declarative mood, that “despite the population of madmen” in the city, “there is no single asylum or hospital to admit them” (*The Story*, 3). This authorial observation portrays the irresponsible and insensitive attitude of postcolonial African leaders who do not care about the population but only about themselves. More so, to buttress his point, the narrator zooms into the life of one madman, whose name is unknown, in order to explain his activities in town. The young madman, whom the narrator says is thirty years old, “wanders daily through the crowded streets or, engrossed in soliloquies punctuated by sporadic and incoherent smiles, rummages mechanically in the refuse or garbage from which he gleans his food, clucking continuously” (*The Story*, 3). The age of this madman symbolizes youthfulness and his madness depicts a society whose leaders have no future for the youths. It is probable this man’s madness might result from his frustration and trauma of the hardship in his society.

The narrator also comments on the general state of stagnation in the postcolonial society where nobody is willing to do anything. The behavior of the citizens falls within the context of dystopian societies where the citizens are disappointed with their leaders and do not want to cooperate with them for anything. Notably, the narrator describes the city as “immense, but paralyzed, city, where no one works any longer and where schools lie as deserted as necropolises, it is not uncommon for swarms of squalling children to chase the naked man” (*The Story*, 4). The use of this detailed description coupled with apt diction illustrates that one is in a society of absolute inertia, frustration, and idleness. Worse still, the narrator makes mention that “schools lie as deserted as necropolises” – a pessimistic indication that the society has no future since in future, there will be nobody to handle the mantle of power and leadership in this postcolonial state. Moreover, the narrator further spotlights the relationship between the forces of law and order and the entire citizenry in this society. In fact, the narrator conveys a

synoptic view of a typical post-independence African society/state where police repression is the order of the day and in his usual candor, affirms the view when he contends that “the residents of this great port” are “trapped as they are in the spiral of the shadow war against the secret or visible police forces of the chief of state” (*The Story*, 4). This narrative statement situates the reader within the confines of a postcolonial authoritarian state where there is the persistent conflict between the police/military and the civilian population. Most probably, these two groups of people – the police and the civilian population – are in conflict because while one is struggling to unchain itself from the dictatorial web of the postcolonial leadership, the army is determined to defend and maintain the system in place.

In probing into Zoaeteleu’s past, the first-person narrator affirms that when Zoaeteleu was forty years of age, he “became yet another victim of absurd denunciation” (*The Story*, 6). The protagonist’s first trauma is the fact that he got married very late and his second trauma “had caused endless devastation in the new republic ever since the promulgation of its independence on January 1, 1960, amid turmoil, discord, and bloodshed three scourges whose evil alliance would inflict tragedy after tragedy on our people” (*The Story*, 6). This comment is ironical and sarcastic because instead of the citizens of the new republic being exultant for their independence from the yoke of colonialism, they are in conflicts among themselves. In fact, the reason for this post-independence mayhem and bedlam is that the colonial master “the former colonial power threw both its political and military tactical experience into the balance” where “it installed an accommodating dictator and made him endorse an insidious civil war” (*The Story*, 6-7). This statement depicts that the independence of this new republic is only partial and not complete since the “accommodating dictator” installed by the “former colonial power” could still manipulate him in what has become known in political discourse as neocolonialism. Evidently, this justifies the chaos and bloodshed after independence because the people are aware that the leader of this new republic and his accolades are mere representatives of the former colonial master who will treat them in the same way as the colonialist did.

Furthermore, the effect of this partial independence, gained by the new republic, is the fact that the country collapsed into a police or autocratic state after independence. In *The Story of the Madman*, the postcolonial citizens, all over the country, are in constant or persistent surveillance and harassment with no freedom of speech and movement. A primary evidence of naked aggression and intemperate torture in the novel is the case of Zoaeteleu who is brutally victimized in his village by the state police “and after receiving several truncheon blows to the head and back because he had been unable to produce his identity card upon being caught in a raid” (*The Story*, 7). He is thrown into the police jeep and incarcerated for six years. Evidently, it is

realized from Beti's novel that police brutality is almost on a daily basis for the narrator says that Zoeteleu's "village was petrified, as was the entire province" after the arrest and brutality of Zoeteleu because "similar incidents occurred here and there every day" (*The Story*, 8). The entire country is not free from this organized state brutality because "Rumor had it that the other provinces of the republic were not exempt, with the exception of the chief of state's native province, although this rumored privilege was not corroborated by people who had traveled there" (*The Story*, 8). In addition, an instance of police brutality is seen through the molestation of Narcisse's friend who had accompanied him to his village to visit his father Zoeteleu. Zoeteleu had invited Narcisse to the village to coerce him to get married and bring forth grandchildren for him. The narrator says that Narcisse's friend had slept late and in the morning "while he was still in bed, a patrol of uniformed men parked its jeep by the side of the road and came to investigate the rumored presence in the village of individuals who did not ordinarily reside there" (*The Story*, 13-14). This attitude of the regime is inscribed within the framework of a police state where spies and informants are put all over the country to report information about the movement of targeted individuals. With this information, Narcisse's friend is arrested by "the repulsive government gorillas" (*The Story*, 14) because he is a stranger in this village.

In their characteristic brutality, the "uniformed men" command all the men and woman in the village to undress "and lie face down in the dust" (*The Story*, 14). In this act of dehumanization, one realizes that in the postcolonial state, the citizens are operating under an aggressive police system where the role of the police/military, in general, is not to take care of the security of the citizens but to defend the political system and its leaders for as long as possible. In this guise, "Accustomed to the permanent inquisition of the dictator's gorillas, the peasants customarily submitted without protest. They behaved accordingly" (*The Story*, 14). The overbearing nature of the aggressive machinery of the postcolonial state, as symbolized by the police force, has dragooned the citizens into unalloyed submission in the face of the dictator and his army who are prepared to unleash acts of brutality against them in their agitation against the political system. Following the misdemeanor of these soldiers, Zoeteleu tells the villagers to revolt against the soldiers in a fight which they are badly wounded. The narrator reports that "the villagers put the dictator-chief of state's men – unarmed, unrecognizable, with swollen faces and tattered uniforms, for once defenseless victims of the ferocity of the crowd – back in their jeep" (*The Story*, 16). The civilian attack on these soldiers and the stealing of their weapons by Narcisse and his friends creates suspense and uncertainty in the locality and in the minds of the reader because one does not know how the regime will react to the attack.

In the midst of tension and uncertainty, an investigation is conducted

by the security of the state to establish what really happened between the soldiers and the civilian population in this village and also to find out whether the villagers seized weapons from the soldiers. In an interview with a colonel, who arrives the village to carry out this investigation, Zoateleu tells him that the only gun in the village was owned by Enoah, the great village hunter, which had been taken from him by the great white chief in the days of colonialism. (*The Story*, 22). As this investigation continues, the narrator testifies that these weapons are in the keeping of Narcisse and his friend whom he describes them as “two urban delinquents”. The narrator further says that the weapons “consisted of three ordinary pistols, three assault rifles, sixty grenades and a grenade launcher, three automatic pistols, a light machine gun, a rocket launcher, and a mortar, all in perfect condition and with enough firepower to storm a Bastille” (*The Story*, 25). The use of the historical allusion, “to storm a Bastille”, does not only show how deadly and frightful the weapons are; it is also a satire on the regime where it spends fabulous resources on armory to suppress civilians when the entire country is living in exaggerated poverty and destitution.

In addition, most police or authoritarian states in postcolonial Africa suffer from the crisis of legitimacy. In such states, the leaders rule by threats, forcefully impose themselves on the citizens, and bring them to submit to their authority even without the expressed wishes of the ruled. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*, argues that in a political society such as the state, legitimacy belongs to the citizens who have the right to dethrone their leaders when they are not working to their benefit because the relationship between the leaders and their citizens is ‘a social contract’ where they surrender their will to their leaders who in turn rules them to their benefit. In Mongo Beti’s novel *The Story of the Madman*, the narrator exposes the illegitimacy of the postcolonial regime by commenting on some of the activities that the regime is undertaking to cleanse its image in the international scene and especially in Western countries. The narrator admits that in this postcolonial republic, “the colonel, who had recently been appointed minister of foreign affairs, was on an extended trip to the United States, where he had the difficult task of convincing a sceptical audience of the legitimacy of the new regime” (*The Story*, 41). The United States, in this context, is an extended metaphor of the international community where the postcolonial state wants to create the fallacious impression that it has legitimacy from its citizens which is not the case. Certainly, the ruling elites of this society are aware that they lack legitimacy from their people and with this they feel insecure because a putsch could easily be organized to topple them. This explains why the rulers invest much more resources of the state for their individual security than in developing the country.

The citizens in this postcolonial fictional state are in constant police

embarrassment and psychological trauma. This state's strategy of putting its citizens in continuous trauma, distress and anguish is to render them weak and vulnerable so that they will not have the courage to rebel against the established authority. Zoeteleu is interrogated and humiliated by the police to identify himself in his village. After much hesitation and quarrel with the police security, he is advised by his granddaughter, who herself had been a victim of police brutality, to identify himself. "Father", said his granddaughter, who had once been slapped by an overzealous thug, "Father, tell them your name and let's be done with it," the frail child begged, backed by the chorus of the patriarch's many descendants, who had gathered in a circle around the old man" (*The Story*, 48). This advice, by Zoeteleu's granddaughter, shows that the citizens have resigned to fate and do not have the courage to stand up against injustice and tyranny in their society. When Zoeteleu finally declares his identity, the soldiers say, somewhat calmly, that their intentions "were just to gather this information for the records" and "As for the rest, expect a visit from the chief of the garrison, who will tell you what your fate will be" (*The Story*, 48). This statement increases Zoeteleu's trauma and those of his family since he does not really know what these soldiers intend to do with the information given to them about himself.

The reason for Zoeteleu's interrogation is known two days after when "the great chief of the neighboring garrison did indeed come to the village" (*The Story*, 48) with his men to arrest Zoeteleu on the grounds that he is one of the coup plotters of the April putsch. On his arrival, the narrator mentions that the great chief of the neighboring garrison was surrounded by his entire staff which was "preceded by two troop carriers crammed with soldiers, and followed at a distance by four light armored cars and three self-propelled rocket launchers" (*The Story*, 48). In fact, his coming with this battalion of soldiers is to frighten the civilian population not to have the audacity to resist the arrest of their patriarch, Zoeteleu. After searching the patriarch's house, the chief handed down his verdict "which was translated by "a haggard and stuttering interpreter" that Zoeteleu's "advice led once valorous officers into the madness of crime and tyranny". He declares to Zoeteleu thus: "You will subsequently be tried by a severe but just tribunal, which will undoubtedly condemn you to death" (*The Story*, 49).

In addition, the brutalization and victimization of political prisoners and critics coupled with the nasty and horrible prison conditions under which these prisoners live are some of the hallmarks of the police state in postcolonial Africa. In support or evidence to this fact, the narrator says that after his arrest, Zoeteleu "was hurled into a dark cell that reeked of urine and feces" and the twenty occupants in the cell "rightly squeezed against each other and unable to stretch their legs out, had only a small metal pan that had long since overflowed and a minuscule brimming trench running

diagonally across the beaten earth floor in which to relieve themselves” (*The Story*, 54). The use of detailed description brings out the nasty prison conditions in the cell and shows that postcolonial leaders treat their citizens inhumanely. While in the cell, he is heavily tortured by the guards. However, one of the guards, a young man called Osomnanga, restrains from torturing the patriarch because of his age. In his dialogue with Zoeteleu, this young guard says:

“I do not want to torture an old man, Papa, it’s bad luck. My grandfather used to tell me, ‘Never inflict suffering on an old man, always honor the elderly. Consider that he would curse you and then you would be lost’ So, while we are alone, scream, scream loudly, scream as if I were giving you mortal blows. Scream loudly! Scream! Howl! What are you waiting for, damned old man, sorcerer of the devil, howl! Louder!” (*The Story*, 55).

Coincidentally as the discussion between him and Zoeteleu is going on, this young man comes to realize that Zoeteleu is the father of his friend Narcisse who is on self-imposed exile abroad. The narrator comments that when Osomnanga discovers that Zoeteleu is Narcisse’s father “The young man held him against his chest for a long time. Surprised, the patriarch credited the ancestors’ ghosts, whose solicitude despite all appearances remained constant, for this reversal” (*The Story*, 56). It is in this guise that the guard “confided to the patriarch” that his trial is a mere formality and that “You are already condemned to die. The date of your execution has already been set. Your trial is nothing but a formality”. (*The Story*, 57) The dialogue between Zoeteleu and Osomnanga brings out the aspect of legal injustice in postcolonial Africa which, by and large, is coterminous with most autocratic states in postcolonial Africa and the world at large. However out of pressure from the people and the international community, the Chief of State orders for the release of Zoeteleu who is flown in a helicopter to his village where he receives a hilarious welcome.

The manipulation and control of the flow of information are customary acts or practices in postcolonial autocratic states. Since knowledge is power, it is the bounden desire of such states to keep the citizens in perpetual ignorance so that they are unconscious of the happenings in their country. Through censorship, the state only gives the information that it wants the citizens to know. This information control is appropriately highlighted in Mongo Beti’s *The Story of the Madman* in the case or trial of Zoeteleu. During Zoeteleu’s trial by the military tribunal of the state, the regime uses the state media to manipulate public opinion concerning the case. The narrator asserts that: “the press, television, and radio media, all under state

control, had persistently been calling attention to Zoateleu's role as mentor to the colonel, one of the highest-ranking officials of the defunct regime" (*The Story*, 51). The reason for this manipulation is to prepare the minds of the public so that when he will be finally executed, it will raise no polemics both at the national and international levels. In order to vilify Zoateleu's personality, the regime's journalists refer to him as "the marabout of rebel diplomacy" and "Not only was he endowed with diabolical powers, they said, he was also a man of formidable intelligence entirely oriented toward perversity and egoism" (*The Story*, 51). Furthermore, these state journalists are subjective in reporting the news concerning Zoateleu's case. Their subjectivity is made lucid when the narrator comments that "Teams of reporters, some equipped with cameras to take footage for television broadcast, had come to tape him, making sure not to allow him to speak and, when he did, not to report his comments" (Betí, *The Story*, 51-52).

Finally, Clive Y. Thomas in *The Rise of the Authoritarian State in Peripheral Societies*, contends among "many outstanding features of the Third World, one which is of particular concern is the prevalence of repression, political assassination, disappearance, and the other evidence of installed dictatorships" (1984: xiii). This comment is the driving force and the real reflection of politics in postcolonial Africa as highlighted in Mongo Betí's in *The Story of the Madman*, where dictatorship of the chief of state is so overbearing and imperious that at the end of the novel there is a general mayhem and resistance to his regime which compels him, against his will, to accept multiparty politics. On this basis, the legalized opposition parties, in the country, rally their supporters to demonstrate for the creation of institutions that will manage the wind of democracy presently blowing in the country. The narrator notes thus:

The political parties that the chief of state had recognized, but which were, in reality, unwanted, gathered on private properties and composed heated motions calling on the chief of state to convene, at once, a fully empowered national conference, the necessary preliminary step, they proclaimed, toward the transition from totalitarian dictatorship to the democratic and open governance of the republic. (*The Story*, 146)

The above passage clearly shows that the chief of state is not prepared for democratic transition because, as the narrator says, the political parties "were, in reality, unwanted" by the regime. This is actually the political situation in contemporary Africa where opposition parties are pejoratively portrayed by members of the ruling clique as people who can contribute nothing to the progress of the nation, apart from violence. This is also seen

in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari*, where His Excellency Ole Excellence bans all forms of oppositions in the country because according to him the citizens do not need opposition parties since they create disorder in the land (*Matigari*, 6-7). It is in this regard that a union of opposition parties is formed to combat the chief of state and his sycophants. In response to this, the regime indulges in acts of wanton assassinations, torture, and the disappearance of citizens who are not in support of the regime. It is due to this uncertainty and his support of the union of political parties, that Narcisse and his friend (the lawyer) are assassinated by Captain Zoaetia, Narcisse's brother without knowing and under the watchful eyes of Jeanne (*The Story*, 159-160).

In sum, this paper set out to examine the conditions or welfare of the African masses after achieving political independence from their colonial masters. Using Mongo Beti's *The Story of the Madman* as the point of focus, the paper verified whether the situation of Africans is better off in the present postcolonial era than in the days of direct colonialism. In this view, Mongo Beti's narrative is an acrimonious and trenchant political diagnosis of the political situation in contemporary Africa where he buttresses the stance that no significant change has taken place in the lives of most postcolonial African citizens after independence. Instead, a handful of comprador bourgeoisie political leaders are basking on the fortunes of the postcolonial state while the majority are languishing in poverty, frustration, and destitution. The lamentable situation in Beti's novel has also been vividly highlighted by Martin Meredith in the following words:

But for the most part, Africa has suffered grievously at the hands of its Big Men and its ruling elites. Their preoccupation, above all, has been to hold power for the purpose of self-enrichment. The patrimonial systems they have used to sustain themselves in power have drained away a huge proportion of state resources. (2005: 687)

Arguably, the situation of postcolonial Africa leaves one to think that African countries were not really mature for political independence at the time most had in the 1960s. This explains why, because of the hasty acquisition of self-rule, most African states degenerated into uncontrollable chaos almost immediately after they gained independence in the 1960s. It is the standpoint of this paper that perhaps the colonial masters should have granted political independence to their African countries on a far later date and not in the 1960s as was done. The paper, therefore, questions the *raison d'être* of political independence and argues that the vision of the struggle for independence has been curtailed and the fallouts of independence have only benefited the postcolonial ruling oligarchy and their

neocolonial masters. Consequently, as said above, there is the imperative need for postcolonial African citizens to re-launch a second struggle for a real and palpable independence.

Works Cited

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Studies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Beti, Mongo. *The Story of the Madman*. Trans. Elizabeth Darnel. London: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- Bjornson, Richard. *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1991.
- Chapman, Michael. "African Literature, African Literatures: Cultural Practice or Art Practice?" Tobias Robert Klein et al. eds. *Texts, Tasks, and Theories: Versions and Subversions in African Literatures 3*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 153-164.
- Fanon, Frantz. "National Culture." Eds. Bill Ashcroft et. al. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995, 153-157.
- Ikambana, Peta. "On Governance, Personal and Military Power in Post-Independent Africa". Mazama, Ama. Ed. *Africa in the 21st Century: Toward a New Future*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 257-261.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- LeRoy, C. Gaylord. "Marxism and Literature". *Literature and the Arts: The Moral Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Mazrui, A. Ali. *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis*. London: Heinemann, 1980.
- Meredith, Martin. *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. London, Free Press, 2005.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Writers in Politics*. 2nd Ed. London: Heinemann, 1997.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. *Africa Must Unite*. London: Panaf, 1963.
- Okunoye, Oyeniyi. "Postcoloniality, African Poetry, and Counter-Discourse." Tobias Robert Klein et al. eds. *Texts, Tasks, and Theories: Versions and Subversions in African Literatures 3*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 111-131.
- Orwell, George. 1984. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. Trans. Maurice Cranston. London: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Thomas, Y. Clive. *The Rise of the Authoritarian State in Peripheral Societies*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.
- Thomson, Alex. *Introduction to African Politics*. 2nd. Ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Tipton, K. Elise. *The Japanese Police State: The Tokko in Interwar*. 3rd ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.

CHAPTER 9

Alobwed'Epie's *The Day God Blinked*: Complexities, Ambiguities and Contradictions in Female Representation

Eleanor Anneh Dasi

Modern trends in literary representations of the African woman often fall back on the subservient role that has been ascribed to her by patriarchy and her struggle to liberate herself from this stringent position. Magaret Afuh's *Born before her Time*, for example, chronicles the life of a young Cameroonian girl who rebels against and frees herself from uncompromising restrictions on girl child evolution. Shadrach Ambanasom (2005) acclaims Afuh for providing extensive narrative space for female subjectivity and sees the novel as a portrayal of the problems¹ faced by African women from an idealistic perspective while setting female education and development as its major purpose. In a similar vein, Emmanuel Ngwang (2009:135) suggests that it is only through a kind of existential rebellion that African women especially can live a life that can guarantee their freedom and give them an opportunity to maximize their potential. Yet even when the women decide to revolt, lack of education and orientation limit them to fewer choices (Mutia 2009:160). The advent of feminist scholarship as it were, presented a great opportunity for women to question traditional roles and advocate a change in status so as to be able to prove their worth as individuals in their own right. Literary writings, sermons, educative talks and general sensitization are methods that have helped to raise consciousness about the negative effects of cultural restrictions patriarchy placed on women. Granted, these persistent reminders brought about major changes in the trend of thought of both male and female Africans, resulting in a gradual alteration in their mindset. Women then began to have a locus and opinion in their own matters both within and without the matrimonial institution. At this point, one can safely say that African women are increasingly breaking free from condescending cultural and patriarchal practices and impositions. But given the contextual realities and experiences these women face in modern day

society, can they boast of a high measure of independence, self-assertiveness and fulfillment even after profoundly undermining tradition/patriarchy? This paper raises issues on whether the modern African woman, as represented in Alobwed'Epie's *The Day God Blinked* has been able to conform to the common agenda of African feminism as a redefinition of the woman from a male-centered world view to a female consciousness. I will go by Stephanie Newel's concept of the African feminist agenda which is a quest to establish new spaces (located within cultural specificities and common identities) through which gender identities can be expressed. These identities should neither be "westernized" nor complicit with women's idealization or stigmatization in African nationalist discourses (2006:153). Discussions in this paper will focus on the complex, ambiguous and contradictory challenges women face in trying to recreate new spaces in a modern African society still very much pitted by gender polarities.

The De-woman/humanization of the modern African woman

The many attempts to reshape women's traditional roles in African societies and the struggle against oppressive gender codes have led to new yet complex ways of representing the female folk in literature, especially in their new found situation of "gender equality". In terms of literary theory, Africans have shifted or expanded the focus of feminism to include their specific cultural experiences. Terms such as African feminism, femalism and womanism amongst others have been coined by African female critics as variants or versions of the whole notion of feminism. Ogunyemi Okonjo (1985), for example, uses the term womanism as an indigenous African gender theory to refer to the African female experience. Basing her argument on the cultural realities of these women, she insists on the appreciation of African values and particularly the incorporation of family, marriage and motherhood as positive experiences for African women. By implication, an accommodationist method, (including men and children) is required to form a meaningful union with women (65). This perspective is suggestive of an emasculation of male superiority in favor of a collective struggle for a harmonious society. As such, the African woman can effectively assert her humanity and individuality in the face of disruptive male practices.

It is true that the onset of political independence of African nations came with educational opportunities for men and women alike. By extension, therefore, women had the chance to acquire white-collar jobs that would give them a measure of financial autonomy and psychic satisfaction. To an extent, the possibilities open to women in the above-mentioned spheres were positive but a critical survey of the actual situation reveals that patriarchy evolved with the sociopolitical changes in the societies and still lurks in

post-independence times thus limiting women's access to power, achievement and self-fulfillment. This barrier is still faced in modern day society and thus accounts for the de-womanisation that the women experience.

Alobwed'Epie presents a society in *The Day God Blinked* which is wrecked by various forms of dehuman/womanizing practices on the woman. The novel opens with the pathetic scene of a girl who is mercilessly rough-handled by the police because she falls prey to the whims and caprices of someone who belongs to an unscrupulous body of people who think their power over others is unlimited. Falsely accused of infanticide, Lucia, the protagonist is brutalized beyond measure and pressurized to attest to a crime she does not commit. Readers empathize all the more with her when they get to read her story and find out that she is simply a victim of male immorality. Young, intelligent and morally upright, Lucia comes into contact with the realities of the outside world when she graduates from university and is in the job market. Being unable to find employment that befits her qualification, she settles in as a hotel maid. Here, she meets Joseph who promises to secure a good job for her, traps her with alcohol, rapes her and abandons her. She not only loses her virginity but also gets pregnant from the rape and this sets the basis for her dilemma that constitutes the story of the novel. Stories like Lucia's abound wherein in trying to eke out a living in a country rendered ruthless by post-independence anarchy, women still have to deal with cruel treatment – rape, rejection, victimisation and debauchery that seem even acuter than what obtained in the old days. Jeanne, Setania and other female characters in the novel experience various forms of oppression from the men folk. The novel thus raises issues on the conflicts that arise with women's attempts to liberate themselves from the yoke of patriarchy to find individuality – conflicts that sometimes question the validity of the fight.

One of such conflicts is evoked in the opposition between religious dogma and social reality. The former is at variance with tradition and/or society as exemplified by the "Reverend Parson of the Saint John of God's Mission". Being deeply immersed in church principles, this man of God is cut away from objective experience and social realities. Thus when Lucia announces her pregnancy to him, his reaction is a spontaneous eviction of Lucia and her family from the mission compound. The first issue here is: does Lucia's whole family have to pay for her predicament? The second issue questions the parson's role of appeaser and comforter in relation to his Christian duties. Rather than provide a safe haven for Lucia, the Parson instead chastises her, and by shifting responsibility to her parents, also forces them to do same. Ambivalence and extended hypocrisy are indicated here; Lucia's sanction is based on a bias and false pre-judgement that has no justification. The circumstances surrounding her quandary are not considered mitigating enough; what matters is that the good name of the church be

maintained even at the expense of her life. Here again, there is duplicity and lack of reciprocity between the church and its members in the sense that despite the loyalty with which Lucia and her parents serve the church, the latter does not return the favor in Lucia's situation of crisis. Inasmuch as what happens to Lucia is un-dignifying, it is nonetheless commonplace in a society fraught with all sorts of vices in the name of modernity. What then becomes of "Jesus did not come for the righteous"? or "God loves us all" or yet again "forgiveness" that the church preaches? Even when Lucia comes back as a prodigal, she is not accepted. If the church, therefore, decides to close its eyes and doors to this truth, then its claim to piety only holds sway for as long as secular experiences do not impinge on religious activities. Christianity claimed to free the African people from those traditional practices that impeded their progress and individuality; and is not the suppression of the woman one of those practices that deny her a complete sense of being? It would not be wrong, under such circumstances, to accuse the church of complicity in the victimization of the girl child and/or woman.

Inasmuch as Lucia's expulsion is first pronounced by the priest, it is actually executed by her father. From a traditional/patriarchal point of view, the father's attitude can be understood as a means to save his dignity and honor as a man and family head. This is a typical trait of African manhood as no man of such pride will bear the shame and stigmatization for having a "loose" daughter. On the foundation of such pride, he disowns Lucia immediately and forbids her any identity linked to him. Though the father uses Christianity (his position as catechist) as defense, his action is boosted by a conscious or an unconscious awareness of his position as head of the family. Furthermore, disconnecting Lucia from her paternity has tradi-cultural implications. Most traditional African societies have a patrilineal descent system where women and children are properties of men. By implication, the ancestry of the father has to be continued through maintenance of his name, which becomes the family name by which his descendants are recognized, and with which they identify to have a claim to cultural identity. When this connection is severed, the individual loses a sense of place, identity and self. This is the situation into which Lucia's father plunges her, which situation fuels her dilemma. Her inability to be identified by name (family), cultural group and religious denomination, work against her during her arrest and trial.² All of these arise because of Lucia's vulnerability as a woman – the assault she receives from Joseph-Marie being at the origin.

Joseph-Marie's attitude towards Lucia tells of the moral decadence that has eaten deep into the fabrics of modern day society, and it most especially reveals the carry-over of the long-standing tradition of male dominance and female susceptibility into the socioeconomic and political arenas. An educated man of Joseph's standing is expected to protect rather than prey

on women given that women's assertive value has been recognized – they have always been a huge asset. For this reason, the mundane notion of the woman being a liability must be spirited away so that their contribution to societal progress and nation building can be ascertained. He acknowledges Lucia's intelligence, but will only offer help in exchange for sexual pleasure. Therefore, the natural prejudice on women and the discriminatory attitudes that cause men to take advantage of women have not changed with the evolution of time. Jeanne's situation also elucidates this fact. Despite her academic potentials, she has not been able to find employment that can lead to economic independence. She is rather faced with two difficult options: prostitution in Europe and settling down as wife to a Grade I teacher who has a lesser academic qualification than she has. Both options boil down to subordination to men and though the second seems better and milder, it is just as ridiculous and far from being fulfilling. She chooses the second and resigns to a rural life of poverty and misery typical of most African societies, and this makes her all the more vulnerable. Her suitor takes advantage of her situation and sexually exploits her as a precondition for marriage. In fact, the author intimates that Jeanne desperately needs this marriage to ensure her social security, moral uprightness and a measure of economic satisfaction. For her to achieve this, she must work hard, and working hard here means satisfying the suitor's every caprice. Unlike in most traditional African societies where a man chooses a woman and asks for her hand in marriage, we witness a kind of reversal here where the modern woman is made to stoop to men for marriage.

It is such a position of compulsory meekness that impedes Lucia's mother, Maria, from showing empathy to her daughter. She does not offer a word in relation to Lucia's expulsion but painfully watches on as the local parson and her husband, the catechist, throw Lucia out. The notion that women (mothers) always provide unconditional love and stand in defense of their children does not apply to Maria. She does not try to defend Lucia in the least but is more concerned with her image as the wife of a catechist who is supposed to uphold the virtues of girlhood and womanhood as prescribed by Roman Catholicism. The innate qualities of unconditional love, tenderness and pity towards offspring that go with motherhood are practically not exhibited by Lucia's mother. The primitive reaction to protectiveness, the blissful love and trust, the joy of having children and the knowledge of their helplessness in the face of adversity as prescribed by Andrea O'Reilly (2004) do not seem to define Maria's maternity. Again, from a mother/daughter perspective, the closeness that is characteristic of mothers and their daughters, even when their relationship is hurting and conflicting, is completely absent between them especially during this period of crisis. The situation reveals itself as one of consternation and repulse. Though it may be

argued that Maria is helpless under the yoke of both patriarchal and western religious domination, she does not, however, make the feeblest attempt to exhibit motherly love qualities. Lucia laments:

My mother watched on as I disappeared into the night. I heard her cry. But she did not call me back. I heard her sob, but she did not protest against my braving the night. Yes, my father, my mother and the parson cast me out of the Holy Mission Compound not minding the dangers of the night ...not minding my state. (78-80)

From every indication then, Lucia spends the most crucial moments of her life away from her mother, not from her own will but from the mother's alliance with the culture of silence imposed on women by patriarchy and later by colonialism's institution of stringent Christian fiats. Maria is not there to perform the initial ritual of motherhood (Lucia's first birthing experience) as is expected and characteristic of African women in general. Thus, Maria trades her daughter's life for a system that does not only victimize her but also ensures her failure – the failure to exhibit her natural maternal qualities vis a vis her daughter. Their relationship becomes controversial as the daughter becomes the mother's victim.

There are other controversies observed in the woman-woman relationship which raise doubts on the validity of the female fight for freedom and equal opportunities. The relationships we witness in the novel are fraught with tensions and prejudices between the women folk. This is especially noticed in the interaction between Lucia and the female police officer. Left in her care after being lacerated, this woman sees in Lucia an object over which to exercise power and control. She inflicts psychological pain on Lucia, which is far more dangerous than the physical torture the male officers subject her to. Lucia is left on a stretcher that has not been disinfected from a delivery not considering the health hazard that may ensue; yet when she complains, the response she gets is that a criminal of her caliber has no right to any humane treatment. The anger and prejudice that the officer takes out on Lucia stems from her frustration of performing peripheral roles in her area of service. The male officers take the exclusive privilege of beating Lucia with the defense that it is an activity requiring the kind of physical strength that only a man can provide. Though it takes physical energy for both men and women to be recruited into the police force, this energy becomes almost useless when in service with males. Handing over Lucia to the female officer for nursing and care-giving, therefore, points to two things: there is no equality in status between male and female even in professional domains, and there is an extension of the female's ascribed role of care-giver in all spheres of life. The thought of being subjugated and given

secondary position plays down on the career woman's psyche and the less privileged woman becomes the tool on which such trauma and frustration are vented. On the other side, Lucia feels disappointed at the officer's attitude for the simple reason that, as women, they are like partners in distress and must, therefore, come together to fight the cause of their oppression and not against each other. Similar to the policewoman is the wardress who prejudges Lucia on unproven allegations and condemns her to worthlessness even before the court passes its judgment. On the basis of this, she loses every iota of humanity towards Lucia and rather remains a cruel, ferocious and emotionless category and version of womanhood. Evidently then, the woman is both victim and victimizer – a situation that renders her fight for equality with men contradictory.

Apart from the police officer and the wardress, attitudes of self-centeredness and nonchalance which impede women's progress are witnessed in the professional responsibilities of both the midwife that delivers Lucia and the Minister of Social Affairs. The midwife's unprofessional and unethical behavior greatly contributes to Lucia's son losing his life to measles two years after birth. She sells free vaccines to patients for exorbitant amounts which the poor cannot afford. The young Joseph's death also stands out as one of the major causes of Lucia's predicament, which predicament is at the core of *The Day God Blinked*. Closely linked to the midwife's unprofessionalism is the Minister's irresponsibility and misapprehension of her official public service duties. Placing a woman at the helm of such a ministry gives the understanding that women are more attuned to the social needs of the under-privileged and vulnerable (often women and children) and would, therefore, respond to these needs as their competence demands. In contrast, Alobwed'Epie exposes us to a minister whose priorities lean on pecuniary engagements from which she reaps direct benefits. Her busy schedule does not allow her time to receive the destitute but permits her grant audience to an outworker for a billion francs contract. The wall around the ministry, which is the object of the contract, can be metaphorically read, given the minister's manners, as a further attempt to restrict access and to keep away those for whom the department was created.

Apparently then, the desire for authority, power, position and financial strength as a means of asserting her being has exposed the modern African woman to malice as seen in the characters of the female police officer, the wardress, the midwife and the Minister of Social Affairs. The education they have acquired seems to have an unconstructive rather than positive effect on their beings such that the essence of womanhood is defeated. They are simply bringers but not sustainers of life and worse still, do not attest to their common sisterhood. These four women have lost all sense of compassion, consideration and care and consequently the composure associated with

African womanhood especially. We witness here a deviation from acceptable social norms, and inappropriate responses to emotional expectations which translate into negativity and conscious irrationality on the part of the woman. However, through Lucia's confrontation with the police officer, we find an appeal to the consciences of such iniquitous female beings. Lucia tells her:

I wonder whether you are a human being... officer, examine yourself in the mirror of ethics, you are a woman like me, an Ewawian like me, a human being like me. If all other things had prevented you from being kind to me, would that curse of being a woman, not have compelled you to look beyond your nose? But I am scandalized by the way the advantaged woman looks low on the disadvantaged one. (6)

The absence of the woman/woman bond reveals an inconsistency in the female fight for political equality with men. The impression one gets is that the fight is individual rather than collective and the question as to whether the woman is a potential ally in the fight against patriarchy arises. Generally, women in many modern African societies are still wrestling with the social, economic and political disproportion added to the established suppression by traditionally/patriarchally prescribed roles. In Cameroon particularly, women are increasingly competing with men in all sectors but if women (like the minister, the police officer, the wardress and the midwife), who have crossed the divide, rather use their positions of responsibility against the less fortunate ones than empowering them, if these women manifest a lack of trust, suppress, oppress, reject and even torture other women, then Lucia's remark that "the greatest enemy of a dog is a dog" (6) would be a fitting conclusion. These women fail to meet up with the description of the new African woman as one who, by virtue of an education, tells her own story, is intent on building a legacy, is determined to succeed despite continuous oppression and above all is able to empower other women (Belinda Otas, 2013). Under such circumstances, no solid ideological base for women's collective struggle against gender oppression can be formed.

As in the above situations, the woman is a participant in her own debasement and de-womanization. Setania particularly exposes herself as a personification of moral decay given that her desire to amass wealth surpasses all other things including both her qualities as a moral being and her dignity as a woman. Her conspiracy against, and eventual murder of her own husband is cruel and unforgivable by every sound moral judgment and though jailed for this crime, prison confinement does not seem enough to curb her obsession with materialism. While in detention, she continues to degrade the essence of womanhood by stuffing her vagina with capsules of

marijuana and laying them out (“birthing money”) when she gets through security. Such an action in itself is filthy but even more disgusting and humiliating is the fact that the toilet is used as delivery room, indicating a collapse in morality propelled by an insatiable craving for wealth. It is worth noting, at this point, that the postcolonial urban environment in most African societies especially Cameroon is a world that has very little bearing on the traditional set-up. Since inhabitants of such spaces are not tied by any blood and/or ethnic affiliations and/or consciousness, traditional morals and etiquette lose value more especially because there is no monitoring of obedience to these rules and roles. Individuals in such situations have to work towards self-sustenance and for the woman particularly, it is more challenging as she must ensure her economic and social survival. In the face of these challenges, the urban woman inevitably remains a self-inflicted victim of social and moral corruption and humiliation.

That notwithstanding, Alobwed’Epie’s complicity in de-womanizing the modern African woman is apparent. To begin with, the female characters who hold positions of responsibility are not named but simply titled, for example, the Minister of Social Affairs, the female Police Officer, the Wardress and the Midwife. The implication here is that these women clutch to their positions as public servants as it permits them exercise power and control, and discard any sociocultural definitions of femininity and/or womanhood that may put a check on their new-found authority. The author seems to say here that accepting the appellation of female or woman limits and hinders the attainment of sociopolitical growth offered the modern African woman. That is why when Lucia asks for a little help from the wardress, her response is a brutal pull of her truncheon.

It is even more depraving when the female characters are given names that bespeak evil and/or docility – traits that are commonly attributed to traditional womanhood from a patriarchal perspective. Setania and Lucia, for example, can be considered derivatives of Satan and Lucifer respectively. These latter figures are known in Christendom to be opposing forces of goodness, meekness and lowliness and these demonic traits characterize the depiction of these two women. They are presented as the most hideous characters – perpetrators of crimes against humanity and womanity; the first murdering her own husband for material wealth and using her genital organ as a safe for drug transportation and the second polluting the city’s lake with the corpse of her dead child. Setania’s portrait particularly fits that of the *femme fatale* or deadly woman³ – dangerous, callous, greedy, emotionless and individualistic; a woman who uses her feminine attributes to satisfy her wildest fantasies. All these make her assume a satanic personality, thus the name Setania.

Looking further into the epistemology of the name Jeanne, docility

and adaptability are denoted which by certain traditional African standards constitute character strengths by a woman. However, Jeanne manifests a weakness of character by surrendering to societal caprices by ignoring the significance of her education and her desire to pursue a career to settle down to miserable life of wifehood to a man whose level of education is far below hers, and who, like any other chauvinist, sees only her sexual value. This goes back to the traditional conception of a woman being a servant to man by virtue of her role as child bearer, rearer and comforter. And even when these women accomplish these traditional roles of marriage and motherhood while submitting to patriarchal control, a sense of fulfillment is not guaranteed. From a purely traditional African perspective, Lucia's mother can be termed an accomplished woman – married and with children but she is not appended to her husband by name, which means that she cannot directly benefit from his wealth. Thus, even with the limitations that wifehood and motherhood present to women in traditional contexts, the author does not seem satisfied and wants to make it look like they have to descend beyond that. Therefore, whether within or outside patriarchy, the African woman's situation of sociopolitical and cultural uncertainty is manifest in Alobwed'Epie's presentation of the woman.

On another scale, the name Lucia, which comes from the Latin "Lux", meaning light, in its own right symbolizes level-headedness, generosity and sincerity. Endowed with these positive traits, personal strength and sympathy-evoking qualities, Lucia, the protagonist of the novel is paradoxically the worst hit by the female crisis. Yet Alobwed'Epie does not empathize with her even in her predicament and so refuses to grant her redemption or the possibility of a new beginning. Therefore, the modern woman's moral uprightness is not even enough to secure for her a positive representation. If the natural order of rewarding good and punishing evil is not respected, and ethical values lose power, then the vision of reconstructing society through literature may be obliterated.

Additionally, the author tactfully removes men from the actions of women thereby unjustly leaving the female perpetrators of their different destinies. For example, the description of Setania's nocturnal activities lean more on her participation in corrupt practices than on corruption as an ill that pervades most post-independence African societies. The insinuation here is that corruption is not a social problem that affects society in general but rather an evil affliction inflamed by the woman. The woman as represented by Setania is therefore used as a symbol of urban/societal decay, interested only in material wealth which ironically is provided only through or by men. Basing his judgement on this negative appreciation, the author serves Setania both poetic and natural justice but no such is reserved for the men with whom she transacts the drug business or yet those who push

her into murdering her husband though there is every indication that their transactions are by commission. Lucia, on her own side, suffers the pain of rape, betrayal and bearing and losing an illegitimate and rejected child while Joseph, the offender gets away scot-free.

Though Alobwed'Epie, unlike other African male writers, does not produce submissive and passive female characters seen only in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, he however creates distorted and sometimes paradoxical images of the urban Cameroonian woman. Specifically noted is the fact that he does not coalesce the educational opportunities of his female characters with collective and supporting empowerment. Rather, he plagues them with obsessive authority, social, cultural and emotional impediments and humiliation as they do not evolve in power, authority and influence with the evolution of the novel. Such representation suits what Blossom Fondo describes as "subtle misogyny" (2010: 329).

Self-actualization and Open Possibilities

Sarah Anyang's study of "Women in Anne Tanyi-Tang's Plays" reveals that Cameroonian women are still working hard to resist sociocultural, economic, religious and political hindrances on their evolution. She notes specifically that though these women are victimized and threatened, they are not defeated. Thus, despite the unconstructive and servile position in which Alobwed'Epie plunges the post-independence Cameroonian woman, there are few indicators of a positive sense of being and self-actualization exhibited by some of the female characters particularly Lucia. The agonizing experiences of duplicity, desertion and rejection that characterize her relationship with her family and the church act as a determining force to the establishment of a new self which she begins asserting by discarding the family name. The name Lucia, which she keeps, does not link her to a father, mother or tribe; identity affinities which have proven treacherous and stifling. The insistence on this name brings Lucia to a new kind of self-realization – that of being an individual in her own right, which further translates into the desire to live life on her own terms. This is boosted by the fact that neither father, mother, religion nor education sympathizes with her in her dilemma. Rather than break her down, this fact on the contrary, provides Lucia with the strength and purpose to stand up for herself. Her determination is manifested in her refusal to reveal to the lawyers any information about her background and this, at the risk of spending the rest of her life in jail.

The firmness in character is not only limited to Lucia's resolve to face life on her own but also extends to her preservation of the virtues and dignities of womanhood. This is expressed in her vehement refusal to succumb

to what she terms “a self degrading spree” (15) (using her most private parts as a secret channel for the transportation of drugs) irrespective of the financial comfort this act will fetch her. Standing firm on the value that “there should be a degree of female dignity that money shouldn’t buy,” Lucia again risks starvation and betrayal from Setania – her quasi-benefactor in prison. Her vehemence is rewarded with Setania’s acquiescence and their relationship is restored on Lucia’s terms. These are pointers that Lucia has a fossilized dignity built from her cultural background, which she uses to stay away from moral and civil criminality. She believes a woman must have that strength of mind to resist male subjugation and this explains why she does not hesitate to bring the police escorts to order when they attempt to sexually assault and exploit her fellow female detainees. Though secular society and church prejudice judge her on discriminatory principles, she is able to maintain a sound ethical self-control and discipline. Curiously, her keen sense of morality on the virtues of womanhood are derived from the Christian religious story of creation, which she interestingly reinterprets to give it a positive meaning. The notion that woman was made from man’s ribs has often been interpreted to mean woman is subordinate to man and should, therefore, succumb to him but to Lucia, this fact makes the woman the most refined of all creatures. Being the nucleus of creation, therefore, means reverence, excellence and above all respect for self and kind; these are virtues Lucia will not compromise.

The issue of female bonding finds expression in the eventual reconciliation that takes place between Lucia/police woman and Lucia/wardress. After a tense and an offensive interaction, Lucia still does not harbor rage but rather appeals to the conscience of the lady by addressing her “sister” and triggering her sense of a shared consciousness of femalehood – the “curse called woman” (8). This prompts her awareness of an emotional feminine call which she positively responds to by heeding Lucia’s plea. The words of consolation she additionally offers, calming her rage against the mortuary attendant and giving her a breakfast treat are all sentient manifestations of a common sisterhood. At this point, it will not be out of place to comment that the woman’s profession and social status have not been able to free her from that curse of being a woman. Much in the same way, the wardress waves off her social and political status in favor of sisterhood with Lucia during her last days in prison. Perhaps the thought of witnessing her being hanged touches her sense of compassion, which extends into an offer of help in the form of pleading with Lucia to talk with the parson. Though this comes when there seems no hope of freedom anymore, its effects cannot be undermined for it is the tenderness and love with which she speaks the words that give Lucia a change of mind. And of course, through Lucia’s interaction with the parson, her story and experiences in a ruthless anarchical

post-independence society are revealed and saved for posterity.

Conclusion

From a universal perspective, feminism is a tool for dismantling the inferiority and superiority complexes that characterized the relationship between women and men. But the experiences of women vary from culture to culture. For African women especially, the complex matrix of inter-gender relationships delimits their quest for open possibilities within their cultural particularities. However, modernity has come with its own impositions and African women have become increasingly conscious of their positions as individuals in their own right. This new consciousness is nonetheless marred by adamant male chauvinists and overzealous female feminist activists. While some women use violent and unruly means to meet up with the challenges brought about by modernity, some men are intent on maintaining them in vulnerable subservient positions. In this situation of confusion and divergence, what remains certain is that the modern African women must live with the times and yet still be “herself”. That is why even after the injustices they face, there are still open possibilities for them to re-assert and re-actualize themselves within their more or less oppressive societies.

Notes

1. Such problems as witnessed in traditional Cameroonian societies include early betrothals, forced marriages, polygamy etc. which stifle the girl child's access to more fulfilling opportunities.
2. Her case file is dumped and forgotten and only re-opened after about three years because she cannot provide an authentic identity.
3. The deadly woman motif traces its origin to the early history of Christian Monasticism during which time a sin was termed deadly because it was a serious moral offense and gave rise to other sins. These sins were mostly associated with women. Setania is guilty of the 2nd and 5th deadly sins (covetousness and gluttony respectively), which lead to the murder of her husband and her penchant for wealth thus her reference as deadly woman.

Works Cited

- Alobwed'Epie. *The Day God Blinked*. Langaa: Bamenda, 2008.
- Ambanasom, Shadrach. “A Woman Writes Back: A Commentary of Margaret Afuh's *Born before her Time*.” *The Post* No 0656, 2005.
- Anyang, Sarah Agbor. “Women in Anne Tanyi-Tang's Plays” *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*. 8. 2006. 2 October 2014. <http://www.jendajournal.com/issue8agbor.html>
- Fondo, Blossom. “Subtle Misogyny: The Femme Fatale Motif in the Novels of John Nkemngong Nkengasong.” *Rupture et Transversalité de la Littérature Camerounaise*. Marcelline Nnomo, Nol Alempong and Faustine Mvogo (eds). Yaounde, Editions Cle, 2010; 329-341

- Mutia, Rosalyn. "Because of Men: A Feminist Interpretation of Dipoko's *Because of Women*." Edward O. Ako (ed). *Cameroon Literature in English: Critical Essays on Fiction and Drama*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009. 153-173
- Newel, Stephanie. *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading*. Elleke Boehmer (ed). Oxford: OUP, 2006.
- Ngwang, Emmanuel. "Arrah's Existentialist Dilemma: A Study of Anne Tanyi-Tang's *Arrah*." Edward O. Ako (ed). *Cameroon Literature in English: Critical Essays on Fiction and Drama*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009. 135-152
- Ogunyemi, C. Okonjo. "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English. *Signs: Journal of Women in culture and Society* 11.1 (1985): 63-80.
- O'Reilly, Andrea (ed). *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2004.
- Otas, Belinda. Interview with Yaaya "The New African Woman: Sincerely Unaopolgetic (For Being Different). Tuesday Dec 13, 2013 iamyaaya.blogspot.com/2013/12/the-new-african-woman-sincerely.html

CHAPTER 10

Globalization and Gender politics in the Indigenous African Society

*Knowing the African Woman in **Tell it on the Mountain***

Edwin Tangwa

Contemporary discourse on gender and ethnicity tends to approach the former from the obvious perspective of the general 'confrontation' of the sexes (Male vs. Female); that is to say male chauvinism against female emancipation or the perennial confrontation between feminism and patriarchy. While such an approach may not be wholly out of touch with contemporary reality, it is perhaps more important in our era of globalization to examine the question from another, conceivably, more relevant angle, especially in relation to Africa. What is generally perceived as the subjugation, marginalization and ultimate negation of the female gender by patriarchal cultural values is actually the consequence of the tendency to confuse the African female identity, which is a product of its culture, with the Western graft which is equally grafted to its culture. Tess Onwueme's *Tell it to Women* is essentially the clash/conflict between these two identities. And like in race and racial identity, the conflict is of the one identity asserting or trying to assert itself over the "Other".

This paper is an exploration into how the production of knowledge affects the woman's identity and self-perception within the African society. In other words, the conflict in Onwueme's play is seen as a clash between two knowledge systems – Western and African. This way of looking at the conflict is borrowed from Edward Said's theoretical conception of knowledge in *Orientalism*. From a feminist perspective, the similitudes between colonialism and patriarchy are obvious and the postcolonial woman is thus seen as doubly colonized; firstly by the discourse and the reality of Western colonialism and, secondly, by the patriarchal values of the postcolonial society. For this reason concepts of postcolonial theory which seek to assess the impact of colonialism on the colonized world can be used to explain/

assess the female experience in patriarchal societies. In this paper, therefore, we use Said's ideas of the significance of knowledge in the construction of subjectivities on which the colonial enterprise operated to assess the conflict in the play under study, which equally x-rays the prevailing situation in postcolonial Africa in the age of globalization. Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia note in *Edward Said* that:

Orientalist texts [...] constructed the Orient and thereby constructed Europe's dominance over it. In a nutshell, [...] power operates in knowledge: the processes by which the West 'knows' the Orient have been a way of exerting power over it. Orientalist texts have their own worldliness, their own affiliations, and they are texts which operate to construct the Orient, to become, in a sense 'more real' than any Oriental reality, more real than any experience or expression of that experience which 'Orientals' themselves might make. (2001:8)

The marginalization or liberation of the woman, therefore, depends on the prevailing 'knowledge' system. In the Nigerian society, as depicted in Onwueme's *Tell it to Women*, the woman *knows* her place, role and duty and that place, role, duty and value are defined by the cultural norms by which she lives. The man's place, role and value, likewise are defined by the same norms. Seen through the prism of Western education which projects a foreign knowledge system, the status of the woman is secondary and such is the knowledge that the Western-educated female characters, Ruth and Daisy, seek to pass across to the Umuada – Idu women.

This paper is therefore intended as a critique of the issue of female identity or identities and its relationship to 'knowledge' in terms of its discursive construction; how the cultural identity of some women renders them 'ethnic' in relation to others. It examines the failure of Western ideological feminist *knowledge* of the woman to agree with the more realistic African female identity and knowledge of 'self' in *Tell it to Women* as a showcase of the fact that the supposed subordination of the female gender is actually a consequence of the 'infiltration' of the Western concept of the Woman, a concept far removed from the African reality. This 'infiltration' of course is an upshot of globalization in which the African female identity invariably gets mixed up with the Western graft thus subjecting the African woman to a sort of identity crisis as she becomes 'ethnic' in the eyes of her Western-educated counterpart who has a different idea of womanhood.

This study thus seeks to answer the following questions: is feminist ideology a threat to the African cultural female identity in an age of globalization? Is the "Better Life for Rural Women Project" a colonizing or an

emancipatory maneuver? A close reading of *Tell it to Women* suggests that the radical departure from the African female identity, grounded in African knowledge systems, and the blind espousal of the Western feminist ideals constitutes part of the African woman's dilemma in this global age. The question of the subordination of the African woman only comes up when her identity and value are evaluated with the 'tools' of Western feminism, and her victimization is the idea of foreigners and not hers. A redefinition of the female identity/place/role in this context will thus require the casting away of some cultural values which the 'victims' themselves (The Umuada or Daughters of Idu) cherish so much they are not ready to let go.

Although globalization may be encroaching in almost every sphere of life, achieving a global "Place" for every woman remains a romantic dream not only because of the uniqueness of the sociocultural factors that define that 'Place' and their variation from place to place, but more because, like in *Tell it to Women*, women themselves do not believe in it. The fact is that the rural women's 'alliance' of sorts with Ruth and Daisy (symbols of Western knowledge of womanhood) in the "Better Life for Rural Women Project" is nothing but a façade barely shrouding the ideological rift between the two groups. This rift, of course, develops from the fact that because of her regard for cultural values on which her identity is defined, the rural woman is regarded as inferior, almost 'ethnic' - in the etymological sense of the word - by Ruth and Daisy who have developed wild ideas about the value, place and identity of the woman and are propagating the dogma of "Global sisterhood" in which they themselves do not believe. "Global Sisterhood, if it ever works, would be an alliance of women against men. Like imperialism, 'Global Sisterhood' is a Western colonizing project which seeks to project a specific (Western) 'knowledge' over another (African) and thus dominate for like Said points out:

The knowledge of the Orient created by, and embodied within the discourse of Orientalism, serves to construct an image of the Orient and the Orientals as subservient and subject to domination by the Occident. Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength [...] in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental and his world. (*Edward Said*, 63)

Ruth's and Daisy's promotion of 'Global Sisterhood' and their imposition of Western ideas of womanhood on the Idu women are also generated out of strength and what they seek, like the colonialists, is not the liberation of the African woman, but her exploitation.

It is the ascribed roles of being male or female (gender roles) in a given society and/or culture that mold and shape male/female identities, which

identities can remain ‘undefiled’ and be inherited from generation to generation provided there is no external influence. With the surge of the wave of globalization, however, exclusive societies which can guarantee their survival are becoming more and more a thing of the past. Significantly, as John Tomlinson emphasizes in *Globalisation and Cultural Identity*, the reason why it is becoming difficult to maintain exclusiveness of identity is simply because, in the modern era of globalization, “location is increasingly penetrated by ‘distance’” (2002:273). From a postcolonial perspective, we may add that the “Self” is increasingly penetrated by the “Other;” or the “Center” by the “Margin.” We have gone a long way from the era when identity was ‘identifiable’; the era when identity was, as Tomlinson puts it, “Something people simply ‘had’ as an undisturbed existential possession, an inheritance, a benefit of traditional long dwelling, of continuity with the past” (2002:269). The possibility of finding an exclusive cultural identity today is by no means more likely than the possibility of finding an exclusive ethnic identity.

Ethnicity like gender is a social construct and this construction rests on the foundation, basically, of cultural ‘difference’. As Werner Sollors points out “‘Ethnicity’ has always denoted negativity, otherness” (*The Postcolonial Studies Reader* “Who is Ethnic?” 220). Werner notes that *the Greek word* “ethnos” from which the English ‘ethnic’ and ‘ethnicity’ are derived denotes ‘gentile’ or ‘heathen’ and that it was used to refer not just to people but also to ‘others’. The word was used to describe others contrastively and negatively (ibid). Such is the ‘expert knowledge’ of the rural woman that Ruth and Daisy have created to exploit and to make the former believe in. Though they claim to be working for the interest of the rural woman, it is obvious that their own interest comes first and the rural woman is just a tool. The violation and destabilization of Idu culture is a consequence of globalization which “has swept like a flood tide through the world’s diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, ‘branded’ homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities” (269). The “Better Life for Rural Women Project” is actually an attempt by the female elite to subjugate and subordinate the rural woman. The stated goal of ‘de-marginalizing’ the latter is nothing but a ploy; it rather ‘ethnifies’ her identity as well as her personality.

Just as the play opens, the ‘difference’ between the elite women and the rural women is made evident. Daisy gives Yemoja what she calls a “dressing-down”, the whole point of which is to ensure that the rural woman (Yemoja in this case) understand her “place in the scheme of things” (15). She tries to ‘know’ her in a way that would facilitate her future exploitation. As noted earlier, although the stated goal of the “Better Life for Rural

Women Project” is to bring the rural and elite women together in a kind of alliance for the de-marginalization of the Woman, the “Place” of the rural woman remains that of subordinate and a tool. Ruth and Daisy variously describe her throughout the play as “despicable”; “dirty”; “louse”; “idiot” and “animal”. She has become ‘ethnic’ and as Daisy warns, “There is no room for dialogue between us”, (that is between the ethnic rural woman and the elite modern woman). Daisy and Ruth have constructed a new myth of the inferiority of the rural woman, which, like the racist assertions of the past against the Black people, tends to view the world from a permanent position of ‘otherness’, the one group perceiving something ‘essentially’ inferior about the other while ignoring the social and cultural forces that account for such differences. As Mary McLeod Bethune argues in *Black Women in White America: A documentary History*,

Greatness is very largely a social accident and almost always socially supported, and the failure of one group to have shining representatives is more apt to be due to lack of opportunity in these fields from which they are barred by social pressure, than lack of capacity. (xxxv)

Such is the kind of world that the elite woman has constructed in *Tell it to Women*. There is no prospect of dialogue with the ‘inferior’ rural woman and her image as portrayed by Ruth and Daisy is no different from that which the slave masters used to have of the slaves they used. The following description of the rural woman is in line with Said’s argument about the creation of Europe’s colonialist ways of ‘knowing’ its others; that is the creation of the colonialist ways of ‘knowing’ the Orient. Daisy describes the Umuada women as follows:

These people are just so crude, so senseless, and so irresponsible that the best thing to do is just not to border with them. It’s to leave them as they are in their darkness ... rural maids are nothing but stubborn pigs full of shit ... And they are so backward that even if the hand of that clock was turned back a century, they would not know the difference ... they are so fixed in their ignorance. (16-17)

This is the kind of language that reveals parallels between colonial ‘knowledge’ of the colonized and the construction of postcolonial subjectivities. The description of the rural woman in the above excerpt is also an attempt to project a certain ‘knowledge’ of her that justifies her marginalization.

The identity of the woman that Daisy and Ruth have gotten from abroad and which has estranged them from their local reality in Idu village, sharply contrasts the African female identity that Idu culture incarnates.

Globalization, as Tomlinson argues, also means the infiltration of the local by the foreign. The quest for dominance is a human predisposition. Thus Daisy's and Ruth's exploitation of social and cultural differences to subject and exploit, perhaps, dehumanize the rural women is a consequence of the clash between two ideals in that global melting pot. It is possible that the social meaning of gender is far removed from its biological reality, which of course may explain why women like Ruth and Daisy can rise to positions of fair competition with men. Yet, when these women start relating to other less-privileged women in terms of 'self'/other' and questioning their mental/intellectual capacities as well as their human worth or worthiness, it becomes difficult to blame male chauvinism or patriarchy and its supposed subordination of the woman.

This takes us to the question of cultural relevance in matters of gender stereotyping and the marginalization of the woman. The supposed marginalization of the African woman by African cultural values is an imported Western idea. It is a misreading of the culture by those who are alien to it. Daisy and Ruth may appear to seek the 'liberation' of the rural woman from the shackles of patriarchy, but the truth is that Idu culture does not subjugate the woman; the woman is held in very high esteem in Idu. Ironically, it is they - Ruth and Daisy - who end up trying to enslave the rural woman in the "*Bitter Life*" (my emphasis) scam. In her address to the women in Idu, Ruth states:

I come to you as a pathfinder to show you the markers and centers from which women have been mystified, ostracized and marginalized for centuries. [...] We are the torchbearers of global sisterhood. Our mission is to break boundaries of confinement and compartmentalization of our potentialities in the oppressive, despotic and tyrannical hegemony of patriarchy imposed on women these many years.... (30)

It is true the women do not understand the high-flown language she uses, but had Ruth been sincere about her concern for the 'plight' of rural women, which plight is her idea and not theirs anyway, it might only then be possible to side with her in her quest for the improvement of the condition of the rural woman. Yet, her "global sisterhood" is nothing but another myth, a charade. It is a romantic ideal whose very working is being impeded by its own advocates because a global sisterhood cannot succeed in an environment plagued by *otherness*; an environment of binary opposites: self/other, center/margin or elite-modern-woman/dumb-savage-rural-woman. This otherness is reflected in just everything, from the opinion Ruth and Daisy have of the rural women to the abstract, almost contemptuous way they

relate to the latter; *telling* them of *their* 'plight' [my emphasis] in a language they cannot understand as Adaku complains:

Your voice is so sweet and your tongue rolls the white man's language so smoothly like boiled yam in palm oil. But sister, your tongue sounds strange to us. Your words do not go down. Your words get stuck in our throat. And we do not understand you. (33)

It is not only the language that Adaku and the other women "do not understand". They do not understand the whole project of the "Beta Laif for Rural women" which is not what it appears to be. It is a colonialist way of claiming to know what is 'good' for the colonized, and it is not strange that the women do not understand them because they do not see anything better that the "beta laif" project can offer. Their 'knowledge' of self does not contradict their traditional setup which defines the specific role for men and women.

What Ruth and Daisy seek, or claim to proffer is not just female gender empowerment *within* the cultural setup of Idu, but a full revision of the "Place" of the woman in utter disregard of cultural values. They seek to create a new woman in the image of the man and, perhaps, beyond; a complete reversal of order as Ruth argues:

The time has come for the redefinition and control of the dialectics of being. The feminist discourse is concerned with the reinscribing and reconstructing of the place of the woman from the viewpoint of opposites. Women are to be centered against the background and parameters in logocentric and pedagogical terms, centers long appropriated by men, and all for the continued domination and suppression of women. (35)

However, the women are neither as unsighted nor as ignorant as they may appear. They refuse to be convinced that Idu culture does not recognize the value of the woman because they *know* exactly what power the Idu woman exerts over the man. The 'new culture' that Daisy and Ruth proffer as a replacement to Idu culture is anything but worthwhile; it is a farce according to Adaku who argues that "anybody is free to dispose of their god and create or inherit any new god whenever they please" (36). She is not ready to give up on her culture which does not define female identity in relation, or in opposition, to the male, but views the woman as a unique being whose value transcends the ordinary definition of value in terms of position, wealth and social status. To her, and to Idu women in general,

Motherhood is the ultimate power [...] While men exhibit their chivalry in the battlefield, women exhibit their own chivalry in the home. I know my world and there is nothing any outsider can come and tell me to devalue. How are they going to take my life and make me see my entire life with their own eyes? (36-7)

The “outsider here” does not refer to Ruth and Daisy alone but to what they represent – namely the “new doctrine of feminism” which presents the new colonialist way of knowing the African woman. It is the case of “distance” penetrating “location” in Tomlinson’s words. It is a typical case of local identities being violated by foreign ideas in an age of globalization, the more powerful seeking to overshadow the powerless in the gradual but steady drive towards a global culture and cultural identity. From the perspective of Idu culture, there is nothing wrong with the “Place” of the woman as it is now. Yet, if Adaku should look at her life and the lives of other women in Idu through the “eyes” of Daisy and Ruth, then she might begin to see something *wrong* about it. And this is the core of the feminist confusion in Africa today: defining African female identity from the perspective of Western (feminist) culture.

In the new female identity and power that Ruth and Daisy proffer to “better” the lives of the rural women, motherhood, the ultimate power of the Idu woman, is irrelevant. This radical stance on feminist issues is reflected in their barely concealed lesbian relationship which can be read as a statement of their utter rejection of the phallus, the Freudian symbol of male domination. Unfortunately, the rural women neither intend, nor are they ready, to reject the men downright. Idu culture recognizes the place of each and deserving value is placed on either group in their permanent interdependence and complementary roles. Male chauvinism and some level of female marginalization may still exist in Idu, but as Adaku argues, that does not justify any radical stance on the issue. She argues that “this thing about taking power from men and giving it to women is where I have a problem. Men have their own power and so do the women of Idu” (36). Later on she adds:

And no matter how important a man, even our own son, thinks he is, his right ends where the right of Umuada [daughters of Idu] begins. We are the womb of the earth. From our womb sons sprout to earth. From our hands, sons return to earth. It is the life power, the mystery of womanhood. Women are the powers of the earth... that no man will ever possess but us... We are the daughters of the land. (54)

Such is the Idu woman's - and by extension, the African woman's - 'knowledge' of self and of her "Place" in the scheme of things, a place that can only be appreciated by those who live it. To claim, as Ruth and Daisy and contemporary feminists do, that that "Place" is not there, is a colonialist tendency because it leaves the impression that everything good can only come from the West and what is peculiar to Africa and African culture is inferior. Such is the type of knowledge promoted by Western education (personified by Ruth and Daisy) which still continues to colonize the African mind

The conflict in *Tell it to Women* is in many ways a consequence of the clash between tradition and modernity, between African tradition and Western 'knowledge' of womanhood, or more aptly the destabilization of Idu cultural setup by the surging wave of globalization through which contrary dominating knowledge flows into the African society. Koko, Yemoja's husband, is so infuriated by what he sees as the violation of Idu cultural setup by maddening foreign ideas he bursts out blaming everything on feminism, "the new disease"

You women [Ruth and Daisy] will be our ruin. You home-wreckers! You ruin the women that you convert to your ways; you uproot them...You travel to these strange lands, import new diseases, infect our women and wreck our homes in the name of what? Transformation? From what to what?...You betray us to other lands for us to be perpetually conquered...have always been conquered.... Our women are embracing the new religion: FE-MI-NISM! Most of our women take the ways of women from other lands to become better women? (55-6)

The conquest to which Koko refers passes through the knowledge of the woman with which Ruth and Daisy have infected his wife. To him, Daisy and Ruth have betrayed their own by blindly espousing the same knowledge by which they are "perpetually conquered, have always been conquered." In this statement, Koko understates the parallel between Ruth's and Daisy's attempt to 'conquer' the women and colonial discourse that led to the colonization of Africa. The Idu female identity is being threatened by what Koko calls the new religion imported from abroad. As he puts it, the Ruths and Daisys of today do not know what it takes to be a woman in Idu (Africa). "What do they know about being a woman in Idu?" Of course they neither know nor care. Their stated mission is to achieve global sisterhood for all women and that can only be possible with the utter destabilization of the Idu traditional setup. But the rural women are not very enthusiastic about such extremes because they are the ones who *know* Idu culture and they know that equality between men and women is a myth, not that men are

more powerful than women (as Ruth and Daisy may think thanks to their ignorance of Idu female identity) but because the women occupy a sacred position and play a sacred role in that cultural setup.

If the women of Idu village give ear to Daisy and Ruth at all, it is partly because of the attraction of the slogan “Better Life for Rural Women” which is apparently a scheme aimed at improving their lives and not at ‘re-Placing’ them or redefining their identity. And they know that given the ‘Place’ of the woman in Idu culture, a better life for her is by extension, a better life for the community. However, the idea of equality with the men does not fail to flatter some of them. But it should be understood, as Okeke explains that the reason why men exclude women from certain activities like sending them to the school which they do not yet understand, for instance, is not because they undervalue the latter but “because daughters are the eternal treasures of our land. It is like giving away the self...the earth, the land and your entire being. How can we risk our treasures that way? ...Our daughters have always been, and will always be, our pride.” (63-4). Such is the value of the woman in Idu; such is the image of the woman now being tainted by wild feminism from abroad. Yemoja, who rebels against the husband and tradition and goes on to be a “hunter” too, only discovers, too late, that the “Better Life for Rural Women” did not include the rural women.

The irony is that while Ruth and Daisy preach equality between the men and women, they make it clear that there can be no equality between women themselves. This explains the aloofness and condescending way they treat Yemoja and the other rural women at the launching ceremony of the “Better Life for Rural Women Project.” What they actually try to do is to construct an “ethnic” image or identity of the rural woman in order to justify their disdain towards them. The image Daisy paints of Yemoja in her telephone conversation with the minister for Home Affairs sounds much like the eighteenth-century justification for slavery. The rural women are:

Necessary evil...crude spill-over straight from hell... These backward village women are babies... They are dense, thick-headed, but much easier to manage... Their brains? That’s if they have any ... like tabula rasa...brand new slate to write on... They are so receptive and appreciative to new ideas...anything is welcome. A flash of light in their state of darkness. (69)

In many ways, the identity of the rural woman that Daisy constructs in opposition to her own is a consequence of the power she now wields over them as result of her education, and is not very different from the identity of the blacks as constructed by the West as a result of their economic and military power in order to colonize and subdue them. Ruth and Daisy, simply

fail to appreciate ‘difference.’ For that reason, there is no point of agreement between the ultra-modern woman and the “backward” rural woman. The distance between that world in which motherhood is supreme and marriage is everything, and the world of Ruth and Daisy in which “marriage is an unforgivable insult to women” (71) is too wide to be covered by such a scam as the “Better Life” project. The attainment of a “global sisterhood for *all* women” thus remains nothing but a catch-phrase.

It is only Western feminists who see the world in terms of “confrontation and oppositionality”; confrontation between male and female. Such a worldview is alien to Idu culture and that is part of the problem faced by Ruth and Daisy on the one hand, and the rural women on the other. They may be seeking the same goals, but their understanding of the ideals differ greatly because unlike Ruth and Daisy who “envision opposites”, the rural women “envision difference and complementarity” (93). As Okei, Daisy’s beleaguered husband, warns her,

Your Cartesian ideology of this or that. Your binary logic of EITHER/OR cannot stand in a world like Idu where everything is seen in terms of dualisms: where everything is related and complementary: man AND woman, good AND evil; night AND day, etc, etc.” (93)

Idu culture sees the man and woman as playing ‘separate’ roles that complement each other and not as people who should be in permanent opposition to each other.

Significantly, the empowerment of the rural woman and the betterment of her life that Ruth and Daisy promise and use to delude the rural women turns out to have been nothing but a bad joke. The reality of the sisterhood as Yemoja comes to realise, is nothing like what she was given to believe. She cannot find her “Place” in the city as she laments:

I’m still searching...searching for the place, for the world that was promised...the city knows no sister. The city knows no brother and father and mother...How close am I to this newfound sister?... Since I came here they’ve used and abused me. I’ve been a thing in a corner of the house...I’m told I cannot eat with the family, as if I had the white disease. Yemoja DON’T! DON’T! Don’t do this! Don’t do that. And even, the spaces and places I owned in the village, i no longer have. Why? Because here I must look into someone’s eyes to be paid for only what pleases her as my new lord...Her Majesty, Daisy Okei, QUEEN OF A NAMELESS CITY! I have tasted life in the city... and I wonder if my life in the village was not much

better than the confusion the city has to offer me...the city takes away the power of women. (101)

This is the bitter truth that Yemoja and the other rural women who come to the city in search of a better life for themselves back in the village have to face. This realization leads to the subsequent rejection of the modern ways symbolized by the marching music to which they are unable to match their steps. They replace it with the drum and transform the “Better Life” march into the ritual for the veneration of the sea goddess and the New Yam dance, thus ruining Daisy’s and Ruth’s ‘achievement’ as the “champagne glass placed in front of [Daisy] to toast their new achievement...suddenly slips from her fingers and shatters into pieces on the table.” (210) As the glass shatters, so does the phony “Better Life Project” whose emptiness and exploitative underpinnings have been unveiled.

The rural women are now transformed as they assert the power Ruth and Daisy had earlier said they did not have. As Adaku points out: they [the Western feminists] say you lack power. Who else knows you are the eternal womb of earth but you? You are the wealth of the sea...How can anyone say you lack power? Through woman, man comes to earth...Earth is woman. Woman is Earth. Power is Earth. Power is woman. (202)

However, Adaku’s death and the circumstances in which it takes place mean that the purity of Idu cultural values is greatly threatened by globalization because she is crushed by Ruth, albeit unconsciously; Ruth who incarnates Western radical feminism in its rawest form. Fortunately, Adaku’s death matches Daisy’s and Ruth’s disappointment and sense of failure at the end of their maneuver. The rural women have debunked the constructed myth of their ‘ethnicity’ and asserted their own locality-defined identity while rejecting the Western import.

Conclusion

While Osonye Tess Onwueme’s *Tell it to Women* may not, in point of fact, be a defence of patriarchy, it is arguably a satire on the Western feminist theorization of the Woman. It is evident that the feminist understanding of womanhood contradicts African cultural knowledge of the woman. The African woman’s ‘knowledge’ of ‘self’ secures her position within her cultural environment and dispels any possibility of conflict or competition with her male counterpart. The idea that western feminist ideology could be relevant to the reality of the African woman is indeed unfounded. And the supposed

subjugation of the African woman by patriarchal cultural values is mere rhetoric. Yemoja's and the rural woman's saga in the city in the hands of fellow women as depicted by Onwueme, lends credit to our initial assertion that female marginalization in the Idu traditional setup is basically a perception or a misconception of the so-called Western feminists and not really something the supposed 'victims' themselves believe in. The drum at the end of the play is a note of victory, and at the same time it marks the final triumph of Idu female identity over Western feminist ideology. The radical feminist assertion of a "separate female identity" beyond biological difference (a separate social identity) in an era of globalization is a reactionary exertion that perpetuates, rather than disarms, the 'ethnicization' of the female gender. The social concepts that sustain the victimization of the female gender need not be countered by other concepts of female "identity" and "Place" in opposition to the male, but by the assertion of a human identity detached from those social considerations that led to their construction in the first place. Onwueme's point, in *Tell it to Women*, seems to be that Africans' knowledge of self should not be appended to the Western in this era of globalization when external forces and ways of 'knowing' are encroaching on every sphere of life. The African worldview should remain African while accommodating the 'mingling' of this increasingly borderless world. In that way, our Daisys, Ruths, Yemojas and Umuada would cohabit peacefully. *Tell it to Women* is, therefore, a clarion call on all African women to recognize and value the culture by which their identities can be defined. In other words, a 'knowledge' of self that transcends the limiting notions imported from the West.

Works Cited

- Onwueme, Osonye Tess. *Tell it to Women*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (Eds.). *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Ashcroft, Bill and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Sollors, Werner. "Who is Ethnic?" *The postcolonial studies Reader*. Ed. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, London: Routledge, 1995. 219-222.
- Tomlinson, John. *Globalisation and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.

CHAPTER 11

Mythic Imagination and the Construction of Postdiasporic Identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*

Divine Che Neba and Didymus Dounla

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Paradise* shows the indispensable role of myth in attempts to answer questions of identity. In this wise, myth goes beyond the simple definition of a traditional story that recounts the story of gods, kings and famous men who achieved heroic feats. Myth "becomes an explanation for the human condition and an answer to the problem of psychological existence..." (Asante 1998:98). It is a tool which individuals and communities use to explain the mysterious, the unknown (Sarnoff 2003:138). This ties with Wole Soyinka's view in *Myth Literature and the African World* that myth is a phenomenon that exercises an unlimited appeal for human imagination and that myths manifest themselves in the culture, literature and the worldview of a people (1986:2). As Asante further opines, myths preserve links to the past – that is cultural memory in a bid to understand or control the present and shape the future. Sarnoff on a similar note states:

Myths place into verbal form primitive understandings about those things that objectively are barely understood... A myth is a tool, sought by societies facing a need to explain 'the unknown'. It is used to organize and convey information about that which would otherwise remain an uncontrolled mystery. Myths adapt mankind's belief that through naming one can understand and control that which one can name. Some of the items brought under control are storm, death, life beyond life, harvests and destinies. The mythopoetic process makes it possible for social groups to be organized around the belief that they alone have 'the secret of control over the unknown' and of the powers of the universe.

According to Sarnoff, the above concerns with mythology are a product

of a broadened awareness which calls for a basic human response. It is born out of a universal impulse to understand and hence predict or control the unknown. He adds that the production of myths which explain certain human and natural mystery stems from early history where human beings sought to interpret sequences of coherent imagery experienced in dreams. Dreams were thus seen as a medium of communication between humans and supernatural beings. Through dreams, therefore, man came to learn about the origins of gods and from that science itself was born (ibid 139). From the above perspective, he asserts that “established myths are far from being simple, entertaining tales. They are the templates and patterns which guide men on the courses of culture and shape interpretations of future dreaming” (139). This can be attributed to the sense of reality which cloaks the oneiric symbol. These symbols reinforce reality in these dreams which initially had been inspired by similar dreams. By so doing, dream content may be seen to reinforce myth, when in actuality it is a myth that initially inspired the dream.

The above mythic platform drives Gurnah’s *Paradise* to present a vibrant coastal African city as a multiethnic postcolonial diaspora with serious riddles of selfhood, whose resolution calls for the construction of a viable postdiasporic identity. Consequently, the chapter demonstrates the role of myth in the construction of postdiaspora identity – how characters tap into the recesses of myth, deconstruct the past and hence fashion an acceptable sense of self. It proceeds to show how Gurnah attempts to resolve the question of identity by exploring characters’ mythic imagination and revamping it with a plethora of mythologies from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. This gives room for characters to deconstruct memory (both personal and cultural), and by so doing subvert otherness. With recourse to an enriched mythic imagination deployed as a site of non-conformism, individuals are able to chart new paths to self-fulfillment and freedom. In other words, a constructive “oscillation between past and present, personal and collective experience” (Prabhu 2007:147) that is the prerequisite in the construction of a viable postdiasporic identity can be achieved through a fully developed mythic imagination. The analysis also shows that the mythic mind at the origin orchestrates a self-other dynamic, which sometimes enables individuals and groups to control or manipulate their destinies. In view of this, the work operates on the contention that Gurnah’s picturization of a viable postdiasporic identity on a rich tapestry of oneiric symbols proffer alternative mythoforms by which individuals and communities can organize unique experiences and aspirations. In this wise, what a postcolonial diaspora offers the individual is a multiplicity of mythologies with which s/he cross-examines or interrogates to consolidate his/her new identity and vision in a complex and pluralistic diasporic milieu. It is only within a

mythic imagination that diasporic subjects can revisit their glorious roots and situate the onset of their trauma in a bid to redefine their fragmented sense of self in a 'chaotic,' 'dangerous' yet promising globalized world.

In *Myth Theory and Criticism*, Charles Eric Reeves cites Ernst Cassirer's assertion that myth forms and shapes human thought; like language, it is a fundamental "symbolic form" that enables humans to respond, and hence create their world. It is the language of experience. He argues that "literature that taps into the recesses of mythic consciousness will reveal in powerful fashion the "dynamic of the life feeling", which gives meaning and intelligibility to our world (par 2). It is from a similar premise that Gurnah in *Paradise*, as well as in his other novels shows the complexity and unstable nature of identity - fluid, shifting, susceptible, negotiable. People born to parents of different ethnicities sometimes either have to defend their identity or present different identities at different places and times. The self-other dynamics of particular places determine who they say they are, or want to be. The question of identity in Gurnah's *Paradise* stems from the forceful displacement of many people from their world that defined them through the caravan trade. In East Africa, it was common practice for children to be offered as *rihani* (bonded slave) in payment for huge debts accrued by parents. Even after the abolition of the slave trade, the practice continued until it was later abolished by the German colonial masters. In "Yusuf's Choice: East African Agency During the German Colonial Period in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Novel *Paradise*", Nina Berman states that the text is a historical novel which unfolds the history of caravan trade, which was one of the most important institutions structuring the multilayered East African social, political, cultural, and economic space at the time" (2013: par 1). And like all displaced peoples, such as the Jews, the Caribbeans, and the African Americans, they had to negotiate a new identity for themselves amid the confusion that oppression breeds.

The problem is usually aggravated by the complex self-other dynamics that exist in their host countries. According to Luca Prono:

The writings of Abdulrazak Gurnah are dominated by issues of identity and displacement and how these issues are shaped by colonialism and slavery. Gurnah's fictional characters are constantly constructing a newer identity for themselves to fit their new environments. They are constantly negotiating between their new lives and their past experience. Gurnah's narratives are all premised on the shattering impact that migration to a new geographical and social context has for his characters' identities. (2005: par 1-2)

Prono expresses this dilemma in Gurnah's novel as "the condition of

being in one place but living in another. The sense of a life left behind, of a people casually and thoughtlessly abandoned, a place and a way of being lost forever" (ibid par 4). These characters, consequently, must grapple with feelings of bitterness and nostalgia. Usually, displacement for them entails separation from their families and erasure of precious past identity.

One of the reasons why diasporic subjects always look back for an authentic self is due to the systemic racism, rejection and marginalization that most often pervade their mainstream host society. The diasporic subject and their offspring are perceived as threats, outsiders, traitors and enemies. The result is sometimes violence and oppression. The scale of violence against blacks in France, the United States and South Africa are good examples. Paul Gilroy argues:

New hatreds and violence arise not, as they did in the past [...] the novel problem of not being able to locate the Other's difference in the common sense lexicon of alterity [...] To have mixed is to have been party to a greater betrayal. Any unsettling traces of hybridity must be excised from the tidy, bleached-out zones of impossibly pure culture. (2005:5)

For the native or black, the problem is compounded by the myth of white superiority that is rooted in myths created by 18th and 19th century western racist theorists such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Arthur de Gobineau and Harry Johnson and projected into the 21st Century by scientists such as James Watson with the aid of the western media and literature. Black or native alterity is seen as inferior, dangerous, and barbaric. When presidential candidate, Donald Trump calls fellow Americans of Mexican descent rapists, which by the way, is a mythoform pervading much of American literature and media, it betrays this kind of mythic consciousness. This is reminiscent of C. P. Cavafy's poem "Waiting for the Barbarians" and J. M. Coetzee's novel of the same title which expose and contest this myth of the native as a dangerous rapist who constantly creeps into the night and rapes young girls and wives. The self mythologizes the risk posed by the other (who in this case is the outsider or immigrant) in order to justify his subjugation, and economic exploitation of the other.

In the postcolonial diaspora, such rejection, vilification and oppression are acute because the self and the other share the same space. Unable and unwilling to associate himself with such myths, the black or native is left in a quandary as to who he really is. The result is the constant struggle for a mythic space from which the other can speak in an authentic manner. For some, they seek to speak from their feeling of trauma, homelessness and in-betweenness but for others, they speak from a shared solidarity with others

and look forward to a new identity with renewed interactions. These two approaches represent the difference between diaspora and creolization. In “Creolization and Diaspora: The Cultural Politics of Divergence and some Convergence,” Robin Cohen articulates the difference thus:

Creolization is thus a ‘here and now’ sensibility that erodes old roots and stresses fresh growth in a novel place of identification. A diasporic consciousness, by contrast, generally reflects a degree of unease with cultural identities in the current location. ‘Homeland’ or a looser notion of ‘home’ is reconstructed and revalorized through fabulation, recovered historical memory and social organization. The past provides a continuing pole of attraction and identification. (2007:1)

The above difference between diaspora discourses and creolization discourses necessitates postdiaspora discourses which bridges the gap between the two. Postdiaspora links diaspora and creolization. As Anjali Prabhu’s *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*, argues postdiaspora is a new phase that globalization has added to Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity in *The Location of Culture*. She argues that because it is usually difficult for postcolonial studies to clearly make the distinction between hybridity (or creolization), and diaspora, the discourse of “postdiaspora” has occurred which describes the dialectic relationship between diaspora and creolization. She argues that while creolization is forward looking and is concerned with interaction, diaspora is premised on past trauma that a people share. Creolization discards history and advocates a merging of cultures while diaspora focuses on loss and victimhood and advocates a return to the mother country. She states that although these two impulses are and should be separate, postcolonial discourse, through historical and political necessity, engages in both stances within the same narrative. Postdiaspora makes postcolonial discourse more productive by linking or balancing these two impulses. It becomes the transition from the past to the present.

Trauma and Identity Crisis in Diaspora

Trauma is a central theme in *Paradise*. It is caused by a sense of loss and homelessness that characters feel due to their separation from and abandonment of their families. The trauma is caused by what Homi Bhabha in “*Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt*” describes as being caught in an aporetic, contingent position, in-between a plurality of practices that are different and yet must occupy the same space of adjudication and articulation (57). For Yusuf, the protagonist in *Paradise*, he is never left to call any one

place home. As a veritable victim of circumstances, Uncle Aziz moves him at will from one place to another. At first, he is left to live at Uncle Aziz's house, and just when he is about to form a substitute family with Khalil, he is taken to live with Hamid, midway to the mountains, and later, with Hussein in the mountains. His trauma is represented through nostalgia. He yearns to rejoin his home and parents. His longing begins just a few hours after he leaves home and realizes that he might never be back again. The narrator recounts that "The train had been moving for a while before the novelty of it began to wear off for Yusuf, and then the thought that he had left home became irresistible. He thought of his mother's easy laughter and began to cry. (18) Writing about this nostalgia in "Gurnah and Naipaul: Intersections of *Paradise* and *a Bend in the River*," Fawzia Mustafa cites Jennifer Wenzel who explores the workings of nostalgia in understanding postcolonial or 'third world' evocations of the past. Wenzel identifies an "anti-imperialist nostalgia" that "holds in mind hope for changes that have yet to be realized, changes that were always yet to be realized" (2016: 7).

The nostalgia that the displaced feels is also caused or intensified by violence and insults he receives from his host family or community. In *Paradise*, Khalil constantly insults and beats Yusuf, whom he claims is stupid and barbaric. His ability to speak Arabic privileges him over Yusuf, whom he considers barbaric. Throughout, he is perceived as an outsider who has come to cause havoc in other people's home. The inhabitants make fun of him, and the mistress considers him as some sweet esoteric fruit that should be consumed with or without its consent. In Hamid's household, he is considered too risky to live in the same house with Hamid's daughter. As a result, Hamid asks Aziz to take him away. He longs for his home, where he was loved and trusted.

After many years of living as *ribani*, an individual with no will of his own, Yusuf ends up developing feelings of self-pity and self-hate. The omniscient narrator recounts that Yusuf thought of Khalil and smiled despite the gloom and sudden sense of self-pity he felt. That was how he would become, if he kept his wits. Like Khalil. Nervous and combative, hemmed in from all sides and dependent. Stranded in the middle of nowhere... Like Kalasinga, a thousand miles from home. Like all of them, stuck in one smelly place or another, infested by longing and comforted by visions of lost wholeness. (175)

The feeling of self-pity and low self-esteem is caused by the inability to return home. Free people like the Merchant, Abdalla, the porters, Hamid and so on freely travel to other parts of the country and return home. As for Yusuf, he only goes to where his master wants him to go; and for Kalasinga, he never says why he cannot return home. However, it is clear that he is stuck in Zanzibar despite all the mockery and insecurity.

Yusuf's self-pity is also caused by his discovery of some hurting truth

hitherto hidden from him. At first, these truths confuse him, but later impress feelings of worthlessness on his psyche. Khalil helps him to understand that the man he had always known, and fondly referred to as Uncle Aziz, is not really an uncle but a slave master. At first, Yusuf does not believe Khalil and keeps on calling him Uncle until when they visit Hussein in the mountains that he really understands his status. He realizes that “uncle” had been a myth created to conceal the truth from him and that his own father had sold him into slavery and his mother had apparently done nothing to stop him.

Khalil’s revelations to Yusuf that he might never see his parents again compound the latter’s trauma. When Yusuf asks after Khalil’s mother and is told that she together with his entire family had abandoned him and left for Arabia, tears fill Yusuf’s eyes as he recognizes the parity of their plights: “He felt homesick and abandoned, but struggled to keep himself from crying. After a moment, Khalil sighed and then reached out and clouted Yusuf on the back of the head ‘except for my little brother’ he said, and then laughed as Yusuf burst into a self-pitying wail.”(39) The shedding of tears indicates Yusuf’s yearning for his severed identity, which according to Khalil, might never be reconnected.

Furthermore, the constant nightmares that Yusuf has while living or travelling with the merchant Aziz indicate his trauma. Yusuf dreams of jagged-edged sabers sawing through his flesh (24). This image bespeaks of the horror and the trauma that Yusuf goes through while living at Uncle Aziz’s house as a slave boy. Sarnoff calls this dream imagery of monsters sawing through his flesh as the oneiric symbols in the traumatic dreams and wish-fulfilling dreams. (163) They enforce the myths of savagery and barbarity of the people around him, thereby warning him of the dangers that surround him in the strange land in which he now lives.

Also, Yusuf always dreams of being attacked by a huge dog with yellow teeth and long mouth. It smiles and speaks clearly to him. Then, it tears open his belly and tries to eat his entrails. Consequently, Yusuf constantly screams in his sleep. He screams while staying with Khalil and during his journey with the merchants. He is even embarrassed when he is told about his constant screaming. The narrator says: “he feels as if he has been found out in weakness beyond remedy. Did they know all the dogs and beasts and shapeless voids which came to prise his self from him in the night?” (125). Due to his trauma, Yusuf has “secret stresses” to borrow Sarnoff’s words (164), Yusuf has no control whatsoever over the oneiric symbols in his dream. His frequent nightmares are as a result of his involuntary separation from his home and family and as result, his loss of identity.

Another source of trauma and hence identity crisis in *Paradise*, stems from the peripheries that exist within the margins in the imagined postcolonial diasporas of the texts. As a result, the *other* suffers doubly. Chimalum

Nwankwo in “African Literature and the Woman: The Imagined Reality as a Strategy of Dissidence,” refers to this condition as a “double jeopardy” (2006:195). This is inspired by Kirsten Peterson and Anna Rutherford’s concept of double colonization in *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Postcolonial Women’s Writing* where women are doubly marginalized and colonized. Similarly, Yusuf is not only a bonded slave severed from his roots, he is gender fluid. A gender fluid person, according to Sarah Marsh in “The Gender-fluid Generation: Young People on Being Male, Female or Non-binary,” is somebody who “doesn’t identify with one gender, instead fluctuating between feeling more male or female” (2016: par 3). Yusuf is desired by both boys and girls. He is considered beautiful by men and sometimes he perceives rape moves from other men. In every village they pass, the kings always claim to need him for special purposes. In fact, Chief Chatu claims that he can broker peace with the traders if Yusuf is sent to live with him. He is locked up in a room where a girl visits him awaiting what the ruthless chief plans to do with him. Furthermore, even within, the Muslim community, Yusuf’s Muslim identity is put into question by his inability to speak or read Arabic. Though he is a Muslim, he is associated more with the barbaric people of the hinterland. So, he is an *other* of slavery, of gender and of religion. All these layers of otherness greatly deprive him of what he really wants to be.

Old Self-other Mythoforms

A mythoform, as defined by Asante in *The Afrocentric Idea*, is the basal psychic pattern by which people organize their experiences and they are usually reported in various existential enactments (1998:97). In most post-colonial communities, various self -other dynamics are inspired by certain mythoforms that are enacted through different myths. The first old mythoform that is presented to young Yusuf by his father is that of the savage, barbarian or demon. Here the other, outsider or stranger is presented as dangerous - as an enemy. The old man expects his son to immediately be scared at the mention of the word savage. In some West African mythology, this is known as juju. Any myths containing “juju” are meant to scare and frighten, especially little children from particular activities or people.

Because Yusuf’s father does not want him to play with native boys due to his vanity and desire to be perceived as different from the other natives, he fills Yusuf with myths of misrepresentations. He further frightens Yusuf that they are surrounded by savages or *wachenzi* who are demon worshipers and heathen residing on trees and under rocks. According to him, “They like nothing better than to kidnap children and make use of them as they wish” (6). He wants to instill in his son a sense of superiority, since as a hotel owner, he considers himself more privileged than the poor natives.

Being of mixed indigenous and Arab descent, he prefers to associate with the privileged Arabs as he is ashamed of his native ancestry. This implies that they are aware that as natives, half-Arab, or Half-half Arab (as Yusuf can be described), one is considered as the other and is rejected by the dominant Arab self. This myth is prevalent in all the communities that Yusuf and other characters travel to. They help to remind people of their origins and instill in them a sense of inferiority. For those living away from their homelands, their vilification by the dominant self instills in them feelings of longing for a place where they can belong. On Yusuf's first journey, he comes into a land of red warriors. Mohammed Abdalla, with whom he is travelling, first makes them to realize that the people are brave, but the subsequent statement proves that he actually means barbaric. Because their skin is "red", the porters claim that it is due to the blood they drink. The myth about them is that in order to become a warrior, one has to hunt a lion and eat its penis, and each penis gives one the right and honor to marry another wife – the more wives one has the more honorable he becomes. They also claim that each time they kill a man, they cut a part of him and keep it in a special bag. They say that though their spears look like clumsy knives on a stick, they are capable of causing much damage. The risk posed by these warriors is probably exaggerated by Abdalla in order to show the importance of his presence as a commander of the porters and guards. His knowledge of them inspires fear and admiration from the rest of the train and gives him a superior posture over the others.

The above myths both challenge and assert his Muslim identity. On the one hand, they erase aspirations he might have had in returning to his native or pagan ways while living in the diaspora. On the other hand, they confuse him and make him question his Muslim identity. The myths refer to people of the hinterlands as savages and seem to suggest that they are not true Muslims. One of the reasons for this is their inability to speak Arab or read the Koran.

Besides the above, there are myths which help to authenticate Yusuf and other characters as Muslim faithfuls while Christians, Hindus and most of the natives are considered infidels and uncivilized. Living in a purely Muslim home, Yusuf is narrated the myth of prophets or sages, who sometimes dress like beggars and come among people to test them. It is a mythoform prevalent in Christianity and other religions used to encourage hospitality to strangers. Yusuf's mother narrates this particular myth because she overhears Mohammed a beggar admonishing Yusuf to always obey his mother. The aim is probably to instill hospitality and obedience in Yusuf.

In postcolonial diasporas, many religious myths are enacted to authenticate certain faiths over others. At the coast, Khalil recounts koranic myths in order to emphasize the superiority of the Islamic faith over other religions.

He narrates stories of wolves and jackals who stole human babies and raised them as their own and trained them to become eaters of putrid flesh. There are also the ghouls who eat dead human flesh of people over whom prayers were not said before burial. He claims that “after Kiyama, after the day that the world ends and God calls everyone to Him . . . after Kiyama the wolf-people will live in the first layer of Hell, thousands and thousands of them, and they’ll eat the sinful people who don’t obey Allah” (29). Khalil’s role, it seems, is to give him the necessary training that will transform him into an obedient slave boy who performed his job without any complaints. From all indications, he is trying to ensure that Yusuf does not stray from the Muslim faith.

Judeo-Christian myths also show the existence of alternative mythoforms. The Lutheran pastor in the novel shows them the use of the iron plough and teaches the natives how to construct the wheel. He tells them that these are gifts from the Judeo-Christian God and that God has sent him to the mountain to offer salvation to them. He tells them that work is God’s divine edict to allow humans to atone for their evil. He equally narrates stories of green valleys that were lush with fruit and cream, and forests that were teeming with goblins and wild beasts, and mountainsides covered with snow and whole villages skating on frozen lakes (62). All these are in a bid to prioritize Judeo-Christian myths over existing myths in the diaspora.

Also, prevalent across the communities depicted in the texts and in probably all African diaspora communities around the world, is the myth of white superiority. In *Paradise*, Yusuf encounters these myths at all points of his life and in every place that he travels to. The narrator tells us that the Germans have entered Zanzibar and are doing everything possible to stop the caravan and slave trade, and probably replace it with their own trade. They want to be at the center of all trade. The boys of the neighborhood tell Yusuf that the Germans are ruthless and fearless; they did whatever they wanted and no one could restrain them. One of the boys even says that “his father had seen a German put his hand in the heart of a blazing fire without being burnt, as if he were a phantom.” (7)

Mohammed Abdalla also shares similar myths about the Europeans: they are eaters of iron, makers of fine guns and of ships as big as towns. He claims that the first time he saw a European, he thought it was a ghost. Yusuf asks out of curiosity if he did speak. Mohammed replies that

Not words known to the human...Perhaps he rumbled. I saw fumes of smoke coming out of his mouth. It could be that they are jinns, for God made them out of fire... But who knows why they have come all this way? ... As if the earth itself had cracked open and thrown them out. Perhaps when they’re done with us, the earth

will open again and suck them back to their land on the other side of the world. (120)

The man from Mombasa also claims that in Russia, the sun shines till midnight, ice rivers and lakes are so thick that one could drive a heaven laden cart on them, the cries of fiends and *jinn*s in the wind that sounds like women and children in distress and anyone who goes out never returns. He says that in the deepest weeks of winter even the sea freezes, and wild dogs and wolves rampage through city streets and would eat any living thing they found, people, horses, anything. He claims that one day he entered one town and found all the people blind-drunk. This is significant because it inspires awe in his listeners, especially when he compares the Russians to the inhabitants of Gog and Magog. He says that what baffles him the most is that these people are Muslims. Although his stories are unbelievable, the vivid picture that he paints inspires a feeling of fear and admiration in the listeners.

From a gender perspective, Yusuf's indigenous myths hold that the only gender category is binary. For example, the boys he hangs around with in his home, tell him that babies live in penises and that a man simply needs to put the baby in a woman's stomach where there is ample space for the child to grow. This definitely introduces identity crisis as the people in diaspora see beyond his indigenous ideologies. Many people refer to him as beautiful, and some like Abdalla even make advances at him. However, he also realizes that though a Muslim, Mohammed Abdalla has a reputation of a merciless sodomizer and could always be seen absent-mindedly stroking his loins. This makes people to refer to him as a demon. Even though Abdalla seems quite pleased with these myths about him and helps to propagate them, the metaphor of demon shows that in their culture homosexuality exists though with a lot of stigma that only the brave, like Abdalla, can accommodate.

The mythoform of elopement is also important in giving Yusuf a sense of otherness. It gives Yusuf an unstable, insecure identity as well as a sense of worthlessness, and insignificance. His father claimed to have married a first wife who was an Arab after they had escaped from her proud parents who had rejected Yusuf's father on grounds of his savage descent and lack of wealth. After eight years of marriage, Yusuf's father decided to send his wife and children with a letter for her parents to beg for forgiveness. Unfortunately, the woman goes and never returns. Yusuf's father uses this myth to justify his fits of violent anger and ill treatment of his wife. Whenever he misbehaves, he expects his wife to understand "the pain of love that goes wrong" (15) and to not accuse him. As a result, he constantly insults his wife, calling her the daughter of a hill tribesman from the back of Taita who lived in a smoky hut and wore stinking goatskin... (13). This explains

why apparently it means nothing for him to offer the young Yusuf as *rihani* for his debt to Uncle Aziz.

Immediately Yusuf starts staying with Khalil, he is exposed and enthralled by myths he tells him. His mythic imagination is both broadened and stretched. Some of the myths confuse his sense of self while others confirm those he had previously acquired. This is because he is not familiar with the mythoforms that inspire these myths.

Contesting (Unviable) Myths

Myths of creation, ancestors, past heroes and heroines, suffering genre, suckling genre and so on that do not lead to progress and self-definition are often deconstructed in postcolonial diaspora. For the diaspora subject, s/he has arrived at a new home, and in order to make sense of and control his new home, he needs to, first of all, deconstruct the old myths and then either reject, rework or acquire new myths around which he can organize his aspirations in his present locale. In this wise, David Chariandy, in "Post-colonial Diasporas," expresses the need to adequately show how diasporic peoples adopt, transform, and contest both Western and non-western epistememes in order to produce new forms of knowledge" (2006:19). These new forms of knowledge inspire the creation of new myths that help them to redefine themselves.

This is clearly evident from Yusuf's reaction to the religious myths of Gog and Magog. Khalil tells Yusuf the myth of Gog and Magog which is a Koranic and biblical myth. These are brutes who have no language and who ravaged the lands of humans. When Dhul Qurnain, the one with two horns, alias Iskander the Conqueror arrived in his conquest of the world, he was informed of them and he then built a wall which they could neither scale nor crack. This wall marks the edge of the world. Yusuf's questions show that he has begun doubting the credibility of these religious myths.

Furthermore, Gurnah in *Paradise* shows that in a diasporic community, people must be willing to tolerate others. When Abdalla tells the rest of the porters myths of the barbarity of the red warriors, they openly contest its validity with many questions. This questioning attitude shows their willingness to accept the difference of the warriors and, if possible, accept them as equals partners in the diaspora community which they share.

Kalasinga, an Indian driver and mechanic, also ridicules and deconstructs many Muslim myths. He recounts a story of a European who lives on the upper foothills of the mountain where they decide to camp for the night during one of their business trips. He says he once repaired the man's generator which was old and noisy, and when he suggested to the man he could arrange for a newer one, the man got angry and called his dogs on him. He

claims that the dogs were big, hairy with large teeth as well as yellow eyes and silver fur, and trained to hunt Muslim men: “if you understand their angry barks, it says I like the meat of Allah-wallahs. Bring me the meat of Muslim man” (79). This plants serious questions in Yusuf’s mind as to the sacredness and superiority of the Muslim faith.

As they sleep, Hamid uses the beauty of the surrounding landscape to share some Muslim myth of paradise with Yusuf. He says that paradise will be more beautiful than the waterfalls they have seen, and that in paradise there are four rivers from which all earthly waters take their source running in all directions and dividing God’s garden into four quarters. Kalasinga contradicts that he has seen these gardens with waterfalls in India. This contradiction casts doubts on the veracity of Hamid’s myths. Kalasinga adds that in India there are also gardens with seven, eight level built by Mogul barbarians, where they had their wild parties and hunted animals. He concludes that if that be the case then the Muslim paradise must be in India. Interestingly enough, Kalasinga intimates that he has read in a spiritual book that this garden exists on earth though it is out of the reach of man. Hamid agrees by stating that he also heard that when God sent the floods to cover the earth at the time of Nabi Nuh, the garden was beyond the reach of the waters and it was preserved (81). What Kalasinga’s contestation does in Yusuf’s mind is to cast doubts over the superiority of his Muslim faith over other faiths.

Kalasinga equally mocks at the story of Yusuf in Egypt and the story of God torturing people in hell. He even claims that these stories are fairy tales, which he finds interesting to the point of translating the Koran into Swahili so that natives can read and hear the ranting God they worship. For him, it is not a religion for grown-ups. These twists and integrations come to ramify the thwarted minds of individuals in postcolonial diasporic communities.

Towards a Postdiasporic Identity

Stuart Hall in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” notes that in diasporic societies, cultural identity results from a sense of “becoming” as well as of “being.” It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. But, like everything which is historical, it undergoes constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, it is subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power (1990:225).

This implies that identity construction is not solely an issue of dredging into the past, but requires an exploration of present experiences and future prospects. This combination paves the way for the construction of

new myths that fully accommodate the individual in his new dispensation. In other words, the process must begin with a project of “provincializing” former centers as a means of asserting the self in the newly created space, to borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincialising Europe*. Gurnah as such decenters former spheres of influence by empowering marginalized groups or ideologies.

From Mohammed Abdalla, Yusuf is able to break myths of sexual binaries that exist in conservative forms of Islam and construct a gender fluid identity for himself. He does not renounce his Muslim identity openly perhaps because he benefits from it, but indirectly distances himself from it ideologically. It is however worth noting that all attempts to conform to the status quo fail. Despite his good looks, Amina does not accept to run away with him. His relationship with Hamid’s daughter is never consummated as well as the girl who waits on him at Chief Chatu’s household. At the end, he chooses to follow the German and their soldiers who are all men. This suggests his decision to finally embrace and accept his sexuality.

With time Yusuf’s trauma begins to subside as he realizes that he needs to move on. He hopes that perhaps in the future his father will raise enough money to come and redeem him. He only weeps for his parents when he could:

At times he panicked at the thought that their images were turning into a faint recollection. The sound of their voices or a particular quality they possessed ... came back to reassure him. It was not that he pined for them, and in any case, he did so less and less with each accumulating moment, rather that the separation from them was the most memorable event in his existence. So he dwelt on it, and was saddened by his loss.... He did the work he was given, carried out whatever instructions Khalil gave him and came to depend on his ‘brother’. When he was allowed to, he worked in the garden. (48)

He settles on his new life doing the work that Khalil assigns to him and when he has the time, he also enjoys working in the garden. This newly constructed life is not solely based on his past but prepares him for future challenges. Trauma is no longer the space from which he speaks, since returning to his parents is no more primordial in his agenda. His newly constructed identity merges the past and present and pave the way for a new lifestyle.

The myths about the Germans inspire awe in Yusuf by virtue of their pervasive manner. Nobody is actually able to contest them because somehow, they explain the prevalent order that is tilted in favor of the Germans. People claim the Germans are merciless in dispensing justice. With them the more severe the punishment, the firmer and unforgiving they become.

They do not listen to any pleading. The natives conclude that it is this lack of emotion that enables them to achieve the things they have.

Kalasinga is a perfect example of a broadened mythic imagination that has acquired a plethora of myths from his background and consequently understands his diaspora society better. He is thus able to relate with people from almost all regions and religions. Though brought up in a devout Sikh household, Kalasinga and his tolerant father accept a bronze statue of Ganesh, a small painting of Jesus Christ the Redeemer and a miniature copy of the Koran to be placed at the back of the shrine. This enables him to easily identify the mythoforms that run across different cultures, and as a result, provide him the platform to construct a postdiasporic identity for himself. As Fawzia observes, Kalasinga is a kind of mediator for Yusuf with whom he increasingly spends time as Yusuf becomes initiated into the world of literacy (par 17).

After counteracting most Muslim myths Kalasinga proceeds to tell Yusuf his own personal myths in order to clarify Yusuf on the sexual fluidity of the diaspora. He recounts how he once took a beautiful woman home who turned out to be a man. Upon hearing this, Yusuf does not ask questions as he had done when some Koranic myths were narrated to him, insinuating something intriguing to him, especially as it prefigures something about his gender-fluid identity. A few moments later, Hussein who is a keen observer, pronounces sadly on the influence that the western myths have over their own myths. He has noticed Yusuf's interest in them and says that "everything is in turmoil" (86). Unlike Hussein who speaks from trauma and loss and is psychologically stuck in the mountains, Kalasinga is able to move from a diasporic to a postdiasporic identity enabling him to interact with others successfully.

Furthermore, the sultan of one of the villages they enter asks if the myths he hears about the Germans are true. He says from what he has heard the German is the big man, the new king. He says he has heard that the German has a head of iron and has weapons which can destroy a whole town in one blow (140). The sultan's mythic imagination is limited, and that is why he is limited in his knowledge and cannot construct a new kind of identity. According to Hamid, there is nothing that can be done. Change is imminent; he says: "let's just leave it all in God's hands. Maybe things will change, but the sun will rise in the east and set in the west. Let's stop this gloomy talk" (88). This means that he advocates submitting to fate by living in the present and not in the past. Also from Hussein, Yusuf learns again once more that Uncle Aziz is not his uncle. Hussein says in his presence that "Do you know what I have heard about him, your partner?... that if his partners cannot pay up, he takes their sons and daughters as *rihani*. This is like in the days of slavery" (89). Also, the fact that even Hamid, himself

a Muslim, criticizes Hussein shows that he has decided to live with the present realities and not holding on to outdated Islamic traditions. He says even though his business is illicit; it is not as bad as killing someone, all he wants is to take care of his family, find good husbands for his daughters and wives for his sons and be able to associate with respectable people. Hamid calls Hussein a philosopher living like a fiend among savages (95). But he does not also renounce the Koran, he tells Yusuf that the Koran is their religion, and it has in it all the wisdom needed to live a good and moral life, but it should not be used to mock others. He claims that there are times like during the fasting period that it should be read (95). When Yusuf tells Khalil about Kalasinga's plans to translate the Koran, Khalil gets angry and asks him why he even sat down to listen to such blasphemy. Yusuf asks him what he should have done. He asks if he should have stoned him to death. This is a liberal form of Islam. This shows his determination to break away from a diaspora unto a postdiaspora identity.

Furthermore, in Chatu's village, Yusuf has a dream in which he is struggling up a steep mountain, menaced by jutting rocks and prowling beasts. As he clears the cliff's edge, he sees thunderous waters in front of him and on the other side, there is a high wall with a gate of flame. The light is the color of plague, and the birdsong is a prophecy of pestilence. Then, a shadowy figure appears by his side and gently says to him: "you have come through very well." (158) These oneiric symbols indicate the challenges that he has courageously surmounted in order to discover his true self and assert it. The shadowy figure praises him for transcending his trauma onto a forward-looking sense of self.

Postdiasporic identity is deconstructionist. The idea of return and freedom are viewed as myths which offer no definite solutions. This is because captivity is itself only a myth in people's eyes as Hamdani a former slave of Uncle Aziz's wife explains to Yusuf. He was offered freedom but he rejected it because he had fallen in love with his work at the garden. He says:

they offered freedom to me as a gift. She did. Who told her she had it to offer? I know the freedom you are talking about. I had that freedom the moment I was born. When these people say you belong to me, I own you, it is like the passing of the rain, or the setting of the sun at the end of the day. The following morning the sun will rise again whether they like it or not. The same with freedom. They can lock you up, put you in chains ... but freedom is not something they can take away. When they have finished with you, they are still as far from owning you as they were on the day you were born. (224)

Hamdani has constructed a postdiasporic identity for himself that enables him to continue leading a positive and fruitful life. He is practical enough to realize that there is no life for him elsewhere but in the diaspora. He has lived with the mistress for so long that there is no other life elsewhere. So, he nurses no dreams of ever returning to his original homeland.

In addition, a postdiasporic identity deconstructs the idea of loss. Upon his return from the interior, Yusuf tells Khalil that he feels as though he is waking from a nightmare and that so often on the journey he felt like a soft-fleshed animal which had left its flesh and was now caught in the open; a vile and grotesque beast blindly smearing its passage across the rubble and the thorns. He says it was as if he had no real existence as if he was living in a dream, over the edge of extinction (180). However, Yusuf also waxes lyrical about how enriching the experience was – the green mountains, the air washed cleaned. In the morning, he says, when the sun strikes the peak of snow, it feels like eternity, like a moment which will never change. He talks of a beautiful waterfall they saw up the mountain and says: “I have never seen anything as beautiful as that. You could hear God breathing” (180), concluding that it was “like the gates of Paradise” (181). He even says that while freely roaming the plains he might even thank his parents for having given him tough lessons to set him up in life. (234) Yusuf realizes that in reconstructing a new identity, one must appreciate the benefits of migration – the experience of seeing other parts of the world, meeting new people, and learning hard lessons.

At the end of the novel, Yusuf has a strange encounter with the dogs which have gathered to eat the piles of excrement left behind by the askaris. As he approaches, the dogs watch him out of the corners of their eyes. They shift their bodies to shield their food from his covetous gaze. He looked for a moment in astonishment. The dogs had known a shit-eater when they saw one (247). The metaphor is grim but it bespeaks of the worthlessness of his present life. He looks at the column of young men captured by the Germans for conscription into their force and he decides to willingly follow it as a path to freedom, armed with the realization that his life in Uncle Aziz’s home is worthless and not better than a dog’s life. This explains why he joins the askaris. Yusuf does not join the Germans because he believes in the myths of white superiority are true. Contrarily, when he eventually meets the white man, he realizes that he is not as beautiful as represented in myths. Yusuf is shocked at the skin of his face, which is stretched tight and smooth as if he had suffered burning or a disease. His smile was a fixed grimace or deformity. His teeth were exposed as if the tightly stretched flesh on his face had already begun to rot and slough off round the mouth. It was the face of a cadaver, and Yusuf was shocked by its ugliness and its look of cruelty. (245)

As seen above, Yusuf's past experience has helped him to have a better knowledge about himself. He is ready to break away with some aspects of his past in order to be free; to be his true self. This is what Bhabha calls the "strategic intellectual," who is "occupied with the relations of authority which secure professional, political, and pedagogical status through the strategy of speaking in a particular time and from a specific space." (1992:57) Now that the balance of power has seemingly shifted in favor of the Germans, and they are diametrically opposed to slavery, he sees them as the only hope in the face of the danger, uncertainty and insecurity that characterize his life. He forces himself out of the cage Uncle Aziz had locked him in order to freely express his unique personality.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the identity crisis that results from the trauma arising from the dislocation and displacement of people. It further explored how Gurnah's characters negotiate or construct new postdiaspora identities by oscillating between the past and the present in a bid to anchor their identity on an understanding of the origins and a need for interacting with the others. They revamp their mythic imagination with new mythologies, cross-examine them with their original myths, and either confirm or contest them in the process. In this light, it showed that strategic selection or/and deconstruction of historical realities help to better locate and define the individual in a postcolonial diasporic environment. We also found out that characters identify mythoforms that cut across old myths and newly created ones. This deconstruction process of unviable myths and adoption of newly created ones helps in reordering the fragmented self. Finally, we observed that Gurnah uses a plethora of oneiric symbols to reinforce the power of myth to inform notions of self and other, as well as characters' need for identity, and subject them to redefining themselves. This implies that postdiasporic identity is a product of being oneself as well as accommodating a new order that helps in enhancing relations with others.

Works Cited

- Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Berman, Nina. "Yusuf's Choice: East African Agency During the German Colonial Period in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Novel *Paradise*." *English Studies in Africa* 56.1 (2013): 51-64. Taylor & Francis Online. Web. 22 May 2013.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt." *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler New York: Routledge, 1992.

- . *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincialising Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Chariandy, David. "Postcolonial Diasporas." *Postcolonial Text* 2.1(2006). Web. 13 Aug. 2016.
- Gurnah, Abdulrazak. *Paradise*. New York: Bloomsbury, 1994.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222-37.
- Marsh, Sarah. "The Gender-fluid Generation: Young People on Being Male, Female or Non-binary." *Theguardian.com*, 26 March 2016. Web. 17 May 2016.
- Mustafa, Fawzia. "Gurnah and Naipul: Intersections of *Paradise* and *a Bend in the River*." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 61.2: (2015): 232-63. Web. 2 Sep. 2016.
- Reality as a Strategy of Dissidence." *Meridians: Feminism*, 6.2 (2006): 195-208.
- Peterson, Kirsten Holst and Anna Rutherford, eds. *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Postcolonial Women's Writing*. Oxford: Dangaroo Press. 1986.
- Prabhu, Anjali. *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Prono, Luca. "Critical Perspectives." *British Council Literature*. literature.britishcouncil.org. 2005. Web. 5 Sep. 2016.
- Reeves, Charles Eric. "Myth Theory and Criticism." *John Hopkins Guideto Literary Theory and Criticism*. John Hopkins University Press, n.d. Web. 12 May 2016.
- Robin Cohen "Creolization and Diaspora: The Cultural Politics of Divergence and some Convergence." *Opportunity Structures in Diaspora Relations: Comparisons in Contemporary Multi-level Politics of Diaspora and Transnational Identity*. Ed. Gloria Totoricagüena. Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2007.
- Sarnoff A. Charles. *Symbols in Structure and Function Volume 3: Symbols in Culture, Art and Myth*. N.c. Xlibris Corporation 2003. Web. 14 Sep. 2016.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Myth and the African World*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Chapter 12

Tracing the Beginnings and the Importance of Development Theater Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa

Victor N. Gomia

The failure of development initiatives to address the immediate needs of communities in Africa decades after independence resulted in efforts by academics and practitioners to experiment in Development Theater. It was increasingly evident that mainstream academic research was not providing solutions to the immediate needs of communities, so action research with focus on hypothetical problems became of interest. Due primarily to its all-inclusive attribute, Development Theater was perceived as an aspect of action research that would address the immediate needs of communities, for it brought hitherto neglected people at the periphery to the center where they would become actively involved in crucial issues in their everyday lives. The significant debut of Development Theater experiment in postcolonial Africa took place in Botswana in 1973; thereafter, practitioners in several countries stepped up in organizing theater workshops that addressed matters of social and economic concerns to the masses. Most of the projects at this beginning were spear-headed by universities in conjunction with governments and international organizations. Numerous landmark workshops remain sources of reference in defining and appreciating the practice on the continent, and they are telling of the degree to which communities can be energized by the use of theater as a tool for mobilization and action. The unique circumstances surrounding the emergence of Development Theater practice in the various countries remain compelling. Practitioners went to the field in many of the countries to experiment with the practice of participatory democracy via cultural practice. As gleaned from the experiment in Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cameroon, Development Theater became an invaluable catalyst in people-oriented development policies and projects. It became a people-empowering exercise in ways seldom known on the continent.

Botswana

Community involvement in theater in Botswana dates back to the pre-colonial days with the Kgotla, a traditional community forum for the people of Botswana. If Kgotla was a forum where participants (often from every facet of the society) sang, danced, told stories and masqueraded, it also was the nucleus of the community from which policies were conceived for eventual consideration by the local traditional administrators for the people within the polity. This vibrant interactive avenue between the traditional rulers and the people started losing steam with the coming of the colonial administration that enormously curtailed the ability of the traditional rulers in community mobilization; the management of community affairs became the responsibility of the local colonial administrators. The weakening of Kgotla by such connivance of events did not give room for vibrant community mobilization structure at the dawn of independence like was the case in Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, there was an urgent need for a form of development framework that would be all-inclusive. Such a need was enhanced by the geographical and historical circumstances surrounding Botswana at the time. Strongly militating for this was the in-land nature of a country that is surrounded by South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia in the East and Zambia in the North. In the advent of Development Theater initiatives, Namibia and Zimbabwe were deep in the fierce struggle for independence that they would achieve by 1990 and 1980, respectively.

With the Kgotla almost non-existent due to its suppression by the colonial authorities, there was a resultant absence of community participation and group decision-making on matters of interest to the people. A growing sense of distress was visible in many rural areas where earlier attempts at eliciting community participation had failed (Ross Kidd, 1978, 1). In the early 1970s a community counselor, Jeppe Kelepile, together with renown adult educationists, Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, then employees of the University of Botswana conceived and nursed the idea of employing theater as a continuation of Kgotla to mobilize people towards greater community participation and action. The idea was born in a village workshop organized by the University of Botswana. At the workshop, drama was used to highlight societal issues in a typical Botswana community. Under the auspices of the University of Botswana's Adult Literacy Programme with Ross Kidd at the helm, a framework for using theater for community education was developed. The program was named Laedza Batanani, which means 'community awakening' within the context of the lacuna created by the absence of Kgotla. With Laedza Batanani came a general re-awakening in the entire country as theater became a popular form of education during agricultural shows, health seminars and district conferences Byram (1999, 39). Laedza

Batanani was designed to take place for five days annually, but the actual process of planning and organizing, performing, discussing the issues and following them up usually spanned more than five days. Byram (1999, 39) lucidly describes the process as follows:

At the first stage, a district team comprising the university personnel and a selected number of district people met at the agricultural office in January 1973 to discuss the objectives of the very first project. There the timetable, budget, staff and basic planning strategies were mapped out. This team selected the villages and resources for the Laedza Batanani program, while keeping the budget relatively low, as is evidenced by the 1976 allocation of 300 pula (Botswana currency) for the project. A low budget was indeed feasible as the salaries and wages of the university and local government participants were covered by their employees. Five to six months after the initial planning meeting, a two-day community workshop was organized which brought together many people from diverse villages in order to identify and discuss the key problems of their communities as well as to create a village team of community leaders who were familiar with the Theatre for Development process as Kidd and Byram explain, “over one hundred community leaders and organizations are invited to this initial workshop. The community representatives bring to this workshop the ideas and concerns that have been discussed in village meetings.”. The gathering invited more discussions of the issues to which specific criteria were added: to identify problems on which their village was inclined to take action; problems that could be accomplished with village support; and problems in which local government workers could offer assistance. Over the several years of Laedza Batanani problems were regularly identified during the community workshop ranging from economic issues to domestic matters. The economic concerns related to poor crops, unemployment, theft and fire, and payment disputes among labourers and employers. Consumer concerns consisted of complaints about poor roads, inflation and transportation. Other matters related to conflicts relating to local government, family and education. For example, many women complained that the absence of their husbands, due to their working across the border, had impacted on their family units. They also protested the restrictions imposed on their involvement with community affairs, as well as other general conflicts surrounding modernization, which fueled a women’s right debate during the 1975 campaign.

The result of Laedza Batanani was spectacular. Similar projects took place in numerous districts around the country as drama became known as an increasingly beneficial way of mobilizing the different communities for action and reaction. The program tended to identify concrete local problems and addressing them locally with the local people in their ways through performances. Though the key experts behind Laedza Batanani identified some major setbacks in their endeavor, the program marks the beginning of the New Theater in Africa that would eventually be experimented in different countries.

Zambia

According to Byram (1999, 47), the reconciliation of theater with development in Zambia started as a consequence of government philosophy (that was largely informed by the basic ideas of socialism) emerging after independence. During the colonial era in Zambia, there was a sustained effort by would-be nationalists to guide and guard indigenous Zambian culture. The would-be nationalist forces encouraged the performances of indigenous art, especially in the rural areas of the country. Like in Zimbabwe and other Southern African countries during the colonial experience, these traditional forms of performing art existed side by side the western-inspired forms. While Zambians performed their indigenous art forms mostly in the rural areas, the settlers focused on the emerging urban settings mostly along the then major rail-way in the country with the primary goal of reminding the settler community of 'home'. The emergence and subsequent assertion of European forms in Zambia had an enormous influence on indigenous forms that were already inspired in part by European forms. Consequently, by the early 1950s there were numerous drama clubs in Zambia that organized themselves into Northern Rhodesia Drama and Choir Association (NRDA) with masked separatist policies that aggressively promoted European art forms at the detriment of African artists and African forms (Dickson Mwansa, 1988). This went a long way to generate new steam in nationalist sentiment that reached its zenith in 1964 with the coming to power of Kenneth Kaunda on the platform of humanism¹, a policy that would be adopted as the national ideology of the country three years later in 1967. Suffice to state that with the culture-focused policy in place quickly came the first nationalist theater association in the country named Zambia Arts Trust (ZAT).

Consonant with the nationalist trend, the Zambian University Theatre troop founded by students and lecturers of the University of Zambia created the University of Zambia Dramatic Society (UNZADRAM). ZAT and UNZADRAM had as their primary objective the encouraging of indigenous

art forms, and in this way both structures played an invaluable role in articulating humanism. It was within this time that a renowned University of Zambia professor, Michael Etherton, joined his colleagues and students to develop Chikwakwa, a travelling theater troop aimed at showcasing the needs of Zambian communities via theater. Chikwakwa made its debut in travelling theater with the adaptation of Ferdinand Oyono's *House Boy* that was performed first in Lusaka and later in the Zambian Northern province of Kasamu with David Kerr as its artistic director. The outfit was managed and staffed by students and lecturers or professors with students performing and lecturers directing. According to Patrick Emeka Idoe (1981: 101):

Given the prevailing political atmosphere in Zambia at the time, the Chikwakwa was seen, in essence, as part of the government's wider plans for national unity and socioeconomic development and the dissemination of knowledge about the national philosophy of humanism

Chikwakwa (literally meaning *grass-cutter*), was created in response to the surrogate theater troops, which professed Zambian ideals but harbored pro-imperialist ideologies. Many are those who saw in it Etherton's hybrid of both Zambian indigenous culture and the so called progressive European values. Informed hugely by Bertolt Brecht, Etherton (1982, 325) himself asserts that "what Brecht had to say about the supreme importance of the people, for whom the popular theater was intended, was matched by the national philosophy of Zambian Humanism and Nyerere's Scientific Socialism."

In its activities, Chikwakwa popularized open-air theater in most provinces in Zambia. The adaptive style in different contexts, especially in the provinces, brought enough excitement for the directors to seriously consider a much more communal twist with a more interactive approach. David Kerr started giving serious consideration to community participation. The community was increasingly perceived as part of the action as much as the audiences in performances as local actors were encouraged to join the productions. Under the dynamic leadership of David Kerr, Chikwakwa embraced a two-prong working component of workshop organization and travelling theater. The choice between the two would be dictated by the economic and political atmosphere in different localities. Thus, broadly speaking, Kerr spearheaded a community work agenda that took the form of travelling theater and workshops. While the latter brought the local people, students and University professors working together for the productions of plays targeted at social concerns (like the case of *Blood* which set out to reconcile tradition and modern medicine), the former expanded the conventional goals of a travelling theater with even much more practical themes in a fast-changing

setting (like encouraging frugal peasant farmers as showcased in *The Credit Union*). These interactions shaped local and national policies, and in some cases actually initiated them. A landmark workshop within this framework is the Chipata Theater Workshop of 1971, sponsored by the English Department and the Extra Mural Studies Department of the University of Zambia. Featuring in this workshop were, amongst others, *Villagers Come to Town* by Felix Chibusi and *Mirror* by Balkunddende. Nwansa (1988: 52) states that the most important achievement of the Chipata Theatre Workshop was the “Chipata Manifesto” which called for the creation of multiple independent theater companies. The manifesto did not only result in the creation of numerous theater companies around the country, but such sporadic explosion of theater companies extended to secondary schools.

Like most of these initiatives at the dawn of independence in Africa, Chikwakwa faced its own challenges. According to Byram

Chikwakwa had its precarious moment with the government, such as the occasion, in 1972, when Etherton organized the protest against the construction of French bomber planes that were being used in South Africa. This jeopardized Etherton’s entry to the Zambia Arts festival and his own job. Consequently, many of the students/actors were arrested, and unable to perform, and Etherton and Horn were expelled from the country... As it was a University project, financial matters and other University concerns affected its ability to function. Within its first three years of formation, Chikwakwa focused on performances at the open-air theater in Lusaka (1999: 50-51).

Despite such challenges, one can argue that the pursuance of the philosophy of humanism by the Zambian government had a tremendous impact on the growth and development of functional theater in the country. Zambia would join the pacesetting countries in Africa in embracing Development Theater as a way of ensuring community participation and subsequent opening-up of the avenue for progress and development.

Nigeria

The beginning of development theater practice in Nigeria is closely associated with Ahmadu Bello University’s Wasan Manoma project. Informed by what had obtained in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana, the University’s Theater Department established numerous theater projects as a way of selling their concept to the people and the authorities. The person behind the initiative was Dr. Steve Abah (1985, 41) who states that the idea was

to “relate theatre studies to and draw inspiration from society.” To Stephen Chifunyise (1989, 19), Abah had not only been influenced by the numerous Development Theater workshops in other parts of Africa but had been inspired by Paolo Freire. Chifunyise explains that: “The Samaru project and the community project have been attempts at moving away from the ‘banking method of teaching that is essentially anti-dialogical towards a dialogical method.”

Unlike in Zambia and Botswana where emphasis was getting everyday people actively involved in all the stages of the practice, the Amadu Bello scenario in Nigeria had students offer community experience as part of their core courses in the University. Development Theater was a training program for first, second and third year students at the Amadu Bello University. The first-year students experimented with their workshop at Samaru. What became known as the Theater for Integrated Development (TIDE), which then partly involved second and third year students, was experimented in several parts of Nigeria with focus on rural and semi-urban areas. In spite of the minute differences in the various experiments due to variables in the social and political climate of workshop venues, the underlying goal remained paramount: to re-awaken the dis-empowered people at the grassroots, to energize them and channel their capacities to the decision-making processes of their community.

Incidentally, Michael Etherton who founded Chikwakwa Theater in Zambia and eventually moved to Amadu Bello was one of the driving forces behind the first community theater workshop fifty miles away from Amadu Bello University campus. The program began as collaboration between the Amadu Bello University students and the farmers of Soba. The farmers served as the resource persons who brought the issues while the students prepared plays for the ‘Wasan Manoma’ series, a Hausa phrase for “Plays for Farmers” (Byram, 1999). Michael Etherton had started the program by identifying community leaders in Soba and arranging discussion sessions with them, the farmers and the students of ABU. Eventually, the students spent some days with the farmers during which they sought to understand their daily challenges. With a better understanding of the farmers’ problems, the students went back to the university and consulted with the agricultural experts so as to have a more scientific insight into the basic problems they had identified as lack of basic drinking water, poor health care, poor education and corruption in local administration. It is then that the students sketched and developed a play for performance at Soba and other neighboring communities.

From the enthusiasm generated by the project at Soba, Amadu Bello University authorities turned to the neighboring community of Samaru. Here the approach employed in Soba was adopted. Students were to actively

take part from the beginning to the end of the workshop.

After Soba and Samaru came the Borno project and the process in all the projects was basically the same. A couple of years later there would be a drift in the practice by Amadu Bello University. The Amadu Bello University Theater Collective decided to take a step ahead by establishing a more meaningful relationship between the facilitators and the beneficiary communities. They did not use much of the data taxonomy that they had been leaning more on before, and in lieu of it, they spent more time with the villagers during which they integrated fully in the chores of the villagers and virtually became part of their daily lives during the workshop periods. This was the case with the 1989 Onyuwei workshop. Ndumbe Eyoh who took part in Onyuwei paints the picture of what obtained as follows:

At Onyuwei we simply allowed the village to ride over us. We joined in several meetings held in the village by various groups whenever one was announced to us. Through such meetings we shared not only in the discussions but also in the cultural dimensions of their lives. Most afternoons and evenings were also used for cultural sharings between villagers and the workshop participants, and we were to discover the richness and variety of the culture and traditions of the Onyuwei people through which the community articulated its problems. For historical reasons, including war and security, the people of Onyuwei had migrated from Ogene by way of Otobi to their present location. Onyuwei is a corruption of Unuwei, which means "Fight of Shame". The victims of internecine wars, their ancestors discovered a highly fertile tract of land buffered by a network of rivers and streams and founded the village where it now stood. The waterways helped... Ironically, this same buffer now threatens the very survival of the community. This is because the village now needs vital supplies from the urban areas and must reach out with its predominantly agricultural produce, a process hampered by the absence of a permanent structure, compounded by bad roads and the periodic flooding of the streams. And so once again my life is linked to yet another need for a bridge ... The community had made several contributions towards the construction of the main bridge linking Onyuwei to the next village, Adankari. Unfortunately, however, this was never enough to construct a permanent structure, and the temporary bridges put up invariably got swept away during the rains because of flooding. This community was particularly sensitive and was rather vociferous and articulate in condemning government about lack of equity in locating development projects. They were aware of less populous and more remote

villages which fared much better simply because they have sons who were highly placed. But what was particularly remarkable was the fact that their frustration had not tempered their resolve, although it was evident that they had already begun to develop a culture of resignation, which in turn was turning into a culture of defiance. What we did was to use improvisation to try to deepen our understanding of the situation, and each evening we gathered in the village square with the villagers and had them act out their problems. During each session, the villagers took their turns to act out the various roles, either to give an interpretation of situations and events they thought had not been properly presented, or to advance the story-line... (1992, 72).

Coming at the heels of the Bomo project (that took place in 1980 and became the spring board for evaluating other projects due to its relative success), the Masca and the Samaru, Onyuwei put Nigeria in the spotlight on the map of the history and development of development theater practice in Africa.

Kenya

Kenya's experimentation with development theater, particularly the well-known Kamiriithu project, ushered in a dramatically different trajectory from the general trend with experimentations in other countries in Africa. To one of the key resource persons at Kamiriithu, Ngugi wa Mirii, the experience was the most important because it has been emulated by schools and discussed by scholars and practitioners in and out of Kenya (Eyoh, 1984, 67). Some background information on Kamiriithu would provide a more compelling sense of appreciation of what has remained a legendary experimentation in development theater practice in Africa.

Some Kamiriithu local residents got together and asked themselves what they could do to a long vacant piece of land allocated to them for social activities by the government. A polyclinic they had agreed to put up (in conjunction with the village development experts) was not being used, and the building was almost falling down. A committee was then set up to find out how best to use the facility. This committee came up with a recommendation that they should organize certain activities towards long-run communal benefits, activities that would include adult literacy amongst others. It is then that the need for a cultural committee resulted with the coming of Ngugi wa Mirii and Ngugi wa Thiong'o into the project as resource persons (Kimani Gecau, 1989). With the inauguration of an educational and cultural center with an all-inclusive adult education program came a

good enough reason for the two playwrights to oblige and engage. In an interview with Ndumbe Eyoh, Ngugi wa Mirii presents the circumstances surrounding Kamiriithu as follows:

It was the result of the people's demands and by the people here I mean the peasants and the workers that I was working with at Kamiriithu, that the whole question of cultural programmes, relevant cultural programmes, was important. The peasants and workers themselves had initiated this and invited us to collaborate, to contribute the resources that we had ourselves, just as they themselves were contributing their energy, as we call it, the "harambe" of sweat. The "Harambe" is what the Kenyan bourgeoisie use as a tool to give back to the people, what they have stolen from them. But here was the "harambe" where people were collaborating together and contributing their own sweat. Popular theatre was started by the people in Kamiriithu village and they invited us. That is how we started. They invited us to put together a play which was relevant, and they approved it through public reading, and we only got started with rehearsals when they finally agreed that the script was relevant to their own situation. The Kenyan authorities see that theatre which is participatory, that is, theatre which involves the ordinary people in decision-making is attacking their position because they would like a top-bottom system where they control the economy, other people's destiny. I would rather have the theatre or the kind of work I am emphasising, where the people have got the tools and the power to decide their own destiny by evaluating critically their own environment. If you are one who is party to their oppression and their economic exploitation, they look at you and present you on stage saying, - our land problems, our lack of education, our lack of food, and so on, are all part and parcel of the economic structure which is supported by the Kenyan comprador, the Kenyan bourgeoisie, in alliance with imperialism, and that is what the peasants were saying (1989, 69).

Thus they developed a play that would be relevant to the adult literacy program and the people of Kamiriithu in general. The initial sketch they scripted was titled "Ngaahika Ndenda", and it was later revised during working sessions with members of the cultural committee who took and played different parts in the performance.

Kamiriithu did not only raise a revolutionary consciousness amongst the masses but tremendously triggered a strong spirit of collaborative action inspired by a new sense of awareness of their circumstances. That

the government of Daniel Arab Moi reacted swiftly in not only banning the play and destroying the two thousand seat open-air theater that the community had constructed but also incarcerating Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a clear proof of the impact of the theater project and the way it not only raised a revolutionary consciousness amongst the masses but went on to instigate a degree of collaborative action based on a new sense of awareness of their immediate reality.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, a relatively young country, has a much more elaborate and grounded development theater tradition in Africa with strong roots from the era of nationalist struggle for independence. As part of its reconstruction strategy, the government of the Southern African nation encouraged and supported the re-animation and development of indigenous culture as a way of concretizing the socialist ideology as an instrument of transferring political and economic power to the people of Zimbabwe. Prior to independence the combatants in the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence had used the "pungwe"² as a tool for informing and educating the masses. Stephen Chifunyise (1990, 276) argues that "pungwe" transformed itself into the post-independence rally, and by 1983 the "pungwe" could still be found in Zimbabwe, co-opted as the significant starting point for a Theater for Development workshop in the district of Mulewa. The 1983 workshop in Mulewa was largely inspired by Kamiriithu and the role played by Ngugi wa Mirii in Mulewa is very significant as indicated by Dale Byram (1999, 114-115) articulating the context of Mulewa:

As part of the process of mobilizing for the community-based theatre ideal, the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education and Production (ZIMFEP) created a theatre company of school leavers, called Zimbabwe theatre works. The participants were selected because of their involvement in ZIMFEP and their keen interest in theatre. The group was used as a resource and its members became the official trainers along with Ngugi wa Mirii and Kimani Gecau. Zimbabwe Theatre Works encouraged other groups to develop community-based theatre in Zimbabwe. And, through the participatory process, community participants were organized into musicians playing ngoma, mbira, drums, and other traditional instruments, as well as dancers and orators. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* was then adapted to the Zimbabwean historical circumstance. Zimbabweans were attracted to the themes. As Ngugi wa Miri explains, "the play was also selected because of its relevance to Zimbabwean history

of struggle against imperialism. In the process of adapting and translating the play into Shona, acting, casting and organizing the production, the community ‘appropriated’ the play making it theirs.”

In an effort to involve as many people as possible, the activities were then re-directed to Penga Penga, a central meeting point for the nine villages that comprised the district. There an open-air theatre was constructed, as had occurred in Kamiriithu, Kenya where the play was performed several times [...] through these engagements, other areas became inspired to create their own community-based theatre projects... Evidently, these initiatives very much appealed to the Zimbabwean government. In 1983, the government hosted two Theatre for Development Workshops in Zimbabwe. The first, the sub-regional workshop at Ranch House College took place on July 18 1983. It brought together theatre workers from the southern region of Africa as well as cultural officers of the African National Congress of South Africa. The second, the African workshop on Theatre for Development, took place between August 24 and September 3 at Mulewa, Zimbabwe.

Essentially, the format of the Murewa workshop was like the workshop at Kamiriithu. As it was typical of this approach in development theatre, the participating persons were sub-divided under the direction of a resource leader who ensured that there were no hitches. Subsequently, improvisations that brought to the limelight the basic challenges in the community were rehearsed with “pungwe” as the base of cultural activities and later staged for reflection and discussion. Chifunyise (1999, 256) opines that development theater in Africa received a “tremendous boost” as more than one hundred experts came from different parts of Africa.

Cameroon

Unlike Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria where traces of development theater practice date back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, development theater practice in Cameroon effectively started in 1984 in Kumba, Meme Division of the South West Region of the country. Emelda Ngufor Samba captures the reasons for the belated start of the practice in Cameroon by arguing that:

Until the mid eighties, Cameroonians were apparently satisfied with the economic and political situation of their country. The saying ‘a full stomach makes no noise’ justifies the lateness with which they

joined other African people to express their plight through popular art forms. Another reason could be the oppressive Ahidjo regime which gave no room for the expression of opinion contrary to that of the state.... (Ngufor Samba 2005, 28)

The Kumba workshop was a follow-up of the Murewa workshop (earlier held in Zimbabwe in 1983). Amongst the numerous participants at Murewa in 1983 was Ndumbe Eyoh, who would be inspired to organize the Kumba workshop the following year. The Kumba workshop, itself a unique endeavor, was rooted in Eyoh's belief that with the social, economic and political challenges his society was facing, he could make himself more useful to his people, and that popular theater could be of tremendous help in this direction. Little surprise therefore that barely a year after Murewa in Zimbabwe came Kumba. Kumba resulted in a performance that brought together three rival villages of Kake, Konye and Kurume taking the resolve to pull together their resources to construct a bridge that would replace a precariously hanging hammock that linked the rival villages to the main farmland on the other side of the River Mounjo. Repairing the hammock had been problematic in the past, and the rivalry amongst the villages did not make matters any better. Thus, and as seen by Eyoh (1989) in "From Kamarithu to Kumba: Methodologies in Popular Theater Practice," like Kamiriithu, Kumba restored a sense of confidence in the people of Kake, Konye and Kurume.

Nothing would be heard or done about development theater in Cameroon until 1997. One of the driving forces behind the re-emergence of development theater practice in Cameroon was Women's Information and Coordination Office, hereafter referred to as WICO. WICO is an umbrella organization that comprises many common initiative groupings and women's associations in the North West Region of Cameroon with branches in Bamenda, Ndop, Batibo and other villages. The objective of WICO is to educate the women of these villages and town to be conscious of their potential and to contribute to the economic, political and social advancement of their communities. According to a report by Bole Butake and Jane Mbacham (1997) on the first development theater workshop titled *Empowering Women through Theater Bamenda*, after watching one of their performances in the Catholic Mission hall at the Big Mankon Cathedral, the then coordinator of WICO Bamenda, Mrs. Elizabeth Hartwig, who had been exploring other methods of sensitizing the masses, expressed her excitement about the fact that theater could be employed as a tool for educating and conscientizing the masses. Mrs. Hartwig's realization of how powerful a tool theater could be in educating the masses inspired her to solicit funds from WICO's primary sponsor, Helvetas, for further experimentation on development theater. The

then director of Helvetas, Mr. Thomas Burge, accepted the proposal, and this resulted to a total of thirteen WICO-sponsored development theater workshops between 1997 and 2001. According to Samba (2005, 31) who participated in all but one of the thirteen workshops as a resource person, some of the workshops were women-only, others involved women and men, and, some included primary school pupils and their teachers.

The WICO-funded Bamenda and Batibo workshops that took place from 9th through the 11th of January 1997 and 25th January through 5th March 1997 had as their primary objective to train participants on the various techniques of development theater thereby empowering them via theater (Bole Butake and Jane Mbacham, 1997, 5). Typical of what obtained in development theater workshops such as Amadu Bello, there were differences at the levels of outcome and reactions despite the fact that the two workshops were on the same themes and the same methodology.

Like their counterparts in the North West Region of Cameroon, the women of the South West Region were mobilizing themselves in different groupings to identify their common concerns and alternative approaches to these concerns. Amongst these groupings was the Nkong Hill Top Common Initiative Group that has as main objective the improvement of the economic status of men and women in the community. Before 1999 the group had used lectures and discussions as its main medium of education. An opportunity offered itself in October 1999 when members of the group chose for their own contribution to the celebration of the International Rural Women's Day a play that reflected the challenges of women of their community. According to Samba (2005, 109) the theme of the play, "Give Credit to the Rural Women" was provided by The World's Women Summit Foundation.

Another workshop was held in Yaoundé on the 18th of May 2001 at the Jean XXXIII Centre at Mvolye. The objective of the workshop was to open up dialogue on the controversial topic of female circumcision and/or female genital mutilation. Organized by the International Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, (CI-of Cameroon), the workshop brought together social workers, practitioners and victims of female circumcision, journalists, teachers and lawyers (Samba, 2005, 116).

Thus Cameroon has made and continues to make its mark in the area of Development Theater in Africa. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that long before the Eyoh-initiated Kumba workshop, religious, cultural and social groupings were staging plays and sketches that were educational, even if the Development Theater attribute was not tagged on them.

As established earlier in this chapter, African theater, especially traditional African theater, played an intrinsic utilitarian role in the society. It would take close to two decades after independence for experts to recognize

and start experimenting with the potential of theater in mass mobilization in postcolonial Africa. Informed in part by the Brazilian popular educationists Paulo Freire (1972) and Augusto Boal (1974) who had extensively practised and researched the subject in South America, African theater practitioners started using the rich indigenous performing traditions as a crucial ground for breeding meaningful social change. In spite of the drawbacks occasioned largely by the neocolonial enterprise, it served and has continued to serve very relevant social functions in communities. Development Theater is being employed in community education initiatives to mobilize and educate the everyday people, most of whom do not have access to education as a cultural pedagogical practice as obtained within school and university systems or in the mass media. Extrapolating the functional role of this new theater in Africa today, Ross Kidd (1979, 6) who has been simultaneously relentless as a practitioner and a theoretician of development theater in Africa. To him the performing arts are able to provide an objectification of reality, a means of mirroring reality in order to stand back and study it creatively. In this case drama attempts to show not only the immediate situation but the larger sociopolitical system of which it is a part. The particular strength of drama is its capacity to portray conflict, which lends itself to a dialectical reading of the world, revealing the underlying class relationships and structures which influence the social situation. This view of the world must be consolidated and sharpened through dialogue: the role of drama in this case is not to provide a finished view of the world, to prescribe the answers but to engage the audience itself in the production of meaning, in finishing or resolving the drama Kid (1979, 6.)

Development Theater therefore does not aim at a result. It aims at the process that would lead to a series of events that constitutes action and reaction for change that is yearned for. It creates an avenue for people to address issues of concern in their lives. In corroborating Kidd, Eyoh (1986,102), reminds us of the potential of that audience that we might want to take for granted. The theater by its very nature and particularly because of its communality and fictionalized situations, he avers, provides a forum whereby communication between members of the same community and between them and those others without who intervene in the community's life can take place without the attendant antagonisms which would normally occur in a directly realistic situation. Many theater practitioners and adults and educators have sought to rediscover theater's potential as a mobilizational tool. Theater is being used in Africa today to stimulate community thinking, develop self-confidence, participation, expression, awareness and organizational strengths of popular groups, communities and organizations. Popular theater builds on the skills people already have; the actors provide the songs, choreograph and the dances, create the scenario and are responsible for the

themes to be developed (Eyoh 1986, 102).

The use of theater to mobilize and trigger critical thoughts within an otherwise dismembered segment of the society is germane to development theater. As an enlightening process, it brings together the entertainment potential of performing arts with the goal of showcasing issues crucial to the health of the community. A performance by the people like obtained in the six countries presented in this chapter would invariably attract their critical attention to their common problems in a manner challenging to their initial perception of the situation. They would then be motivated to give the situation a fresh look and brainstorm on possible solutions for their own good. In this manner, Byram et al (1978, 78) see in theater a two-prong communication process of theater serving as a catalyst by provoking discussions on issues and as an agent of action as it provokes the involvement of people in acting on those issues that are important in and for their livelihood.

In so employing theater as a vehicle for mass education, the enactment basically serves as an accelerator intended to trigger critical reflection that leads to the affirmation of faith in the people's sense of belonging and belief in themselves. Moreover, by exploring the people's social reality in an all-inclusive manner, community participation is encouraged. Many people who would normally not heed a call for their input in a communal project would feel energized to do it with a strong sense of self-confidence. As would be seen in the experiment in the countries discussed earlier in this chapter, development theater has the potential of influencing community education in many ways than any medium of communication would. These areas include, and are not limited to, non-formal education, health education campaigns, agricultural extension campaigns, community development projects intended to motivate self-help and mass sensitization campaign.

Notes

1. Humanism underscored the government's intention to introduce the use of indigenous Zambian life styles and values as a model of constructing the new nation loyal to tradition and at the same time capable of functioning in the global market economy. The concept had as its focal points all-inclusive democracy with its primary attribute of decentralized government, its focus on communalism with emphasis on the family as the nucleus of that community; its all-inclusive nature that asserts the idea of classlessness and equal opportunity in the country. This was going to be the foundation for Zambian national consciousness.
2. The "pungwe" enabled the freedom fighters to sensitize the people of Zimbabwe on their activities and the role the common man was to play in the struggle. It enabled the voice of the people to be heard and considered in the decisions on which direction the struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe would take. As such, it became a vital part of the Zimbabwean social function that eventually translated into a fertile ground for Development Theatre. For more on this see Stephen Chifunyise's "Trends in Zimbabwean Theatre since 1980" in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (2) (June 1990): 276.

Works Cited

- Abah, Oga S. "Popular Theatre as a Strategy for Education and Development: The Example of Some African Countries" *IFDA* 48 (August, 1985).
- Abah, Ogah, "Popular Theatre as a Strategy for Development: The Zimbabwe Example" in *Fako*, 1:1, 1985, p. 1 - 23
- Boal, Augusto. *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. New York: Verso, 2004.
- . *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Toronto: Pluto Press, 1985.
- Breitinger, Eckhard. *Theatre for Development in Africa*, No 36. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 1993.
- Byam, Dale. *Community in Motion: Theatre for development in Africa*. London: Bergin and Garvey, 1999.
- Byram, Martin and Kidd, Ross. "Organizing Popular Theatre: The Laedza Batanani Experience: 1974-78", Gaborone, Botswana: 1978.
- Chifunye, Stephen. *Theatre for Development*. Lusaka: International Theatre Institute, 1980.
- Eyoh, Ndumde. *Hammocks to Bridges: Report of the Workshop on Theatre for Integrated Rural Development*. Yaounde: BET and Co, 1986.
- Eyoh, N Hansel. "Popular Theatre Revisited" in Anne Fuck, (ed) *New Theatre in Francophone and Anglophone Africa*, Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999, 95 - 138.
- Kerr, David. *African popular Theatre: From Pre-colonial times to the present Day*. London: Heinemann, 1995.
- Kidd, Ross. *From People's Theatre for Revolution to Popular Theatre for Reconstruction: Diary of Zimbabwean Workshop*. Toronto: CESO Verhandeling, no. 33, 1984.
- . "Introduction: Folk Media, Popular Theatre and Conflicting Strategies for Social Change in the Third World." In Ross Kidd and Nat Coletta, (eds), *Tradition for Development: Indigenous Structures and Folk Media in Non-Formal Education*. Berlin, International Council for Adult Education and German Foundation for International Development, 1980.
- Kidd, Ross and Byram, Martin. *Popular Theatre and Participation in Development = Three Botswana Case Studies*. Gaborone: Bosele Tshwaraganang Publications, 1978.
- Kidd, Ross and Nat Coletta, (eds.) *Tradition for Development: Indigenous Structures and Folk Media in Non-Formal Education*. Berlin: German Foundation for International Development and International Council for Adult Education, 1980.
- Thiong'o, Ngugi and Ngugi Wa Miri. *I will Marry when I Want*. London: Heinemann, 1982.
- Ross Kidd and Martin Byram "Popular Theatre: A Technique for Participatory Research" in *Working Paper 5 Toronto*: Participatory Research Group, 1978.

CHAPTER 13

Tracking the Absence of Theorizing Applied Theater in Africa

Victor S. Dugga

Theater as a branch of literature means different things to different people. Several genres of theater also characterize different societies. From Broadway musicals, dance theaters and burlesque to community organized performances, social contexts have always determined the predominant theater culture. The general notion of theater particularly from the 18th Century has been that of entertainment traditionally characterized by the interpretation of scripts in the mainstream theater. Theater has however been experimented upon and diversified all over the world.

One aspect of theater that has become more pronounced since the 1980s is the functional application of theater to social issues within communities. Taking roots from the Bertolt Brecht *Lehrstucke* in Germany, the learning potential of theater has come to be widely accepted as alternative theater and has risen rapidly in profile across the world. Even while Brecht identified the political awareness platform of theater, Erwin Piscator's directorial expression lifted theater to an agitprop level of active engagement. The trajectory of using theater for intervention in issues of development would later give credence to this vision of the social application of theater.

The emergence of applied theater has its source from the application of theater to issues of development across the world. It has several converging histories, theories and practices. Alternative theater practices now abound in different forms and with appellations ranging from Theater in Education (TIE), Popular Theater, Theater of the Oppressed (TO), Theater for Health Education (THE), Theater for Development (TfD), Prison Theater, Community-based Theater, Museum Theater to Reminiscence Theater. The term 'Applied Theater' (AT) is therefore used to refer to these alternative forms of theater.

Though the practice of grassroots, social, political or radical theater has been more than three decades old, the term 'Applied Theater' (AT) only

emerged within the last decade to capture the inclusive nature of alternative theaters (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009). The underlining similarity between the diverse forms is their commitment to “the power of theater in making a difference in the human lifespan.” (Taylor, 2006) Performance practices in applied theater fall outside mainstream theater. These take place in “non-traditional settings and with marginalized communities.” (Thomson and Jackson, xvi). One or more of the following qualities has characterized Applied Theater, used interchangeably with TfD in this paper:

- Its performers may or may not be skilled in theater arts
- Audiences have vested interest in issues taken up by the performers
- It actively generates and interprets a theater piece as against the interpretation of a written script in mainstream theater
- It is a people-empowered and empowering art
- The theater practitioner is a facilitator of learning

The purpose of Applied Theater (AT) in its various models is to reassert and celebrate memory and history, and to undermine the status quo in order to promote positive social change. In both instances, Applied Theater holds the potential to be educational, reflective and rehabilitative. In this role of the theater practitioner as an agent of change, the participation of the audience is enlisted in varying degrees (Babbie and Mouton, 2005).

The giant leap from Bertolt Brecht’s new esthetic of ‘Learning plays’ in the 20th century was a continuation of Alfred Jarry’s and Vsevolod Meyerhold’s practice which challenged received ideas about theater performances. The several forms of theater that were inspired by these antecedents have engaged audiences interactively in performances in different parts of the world. In Africa, many local issues have been adopted in the application of theater to development. Theater has been used by government agencies as intervention strategy to educate farmers on new farming methods; UNICEF to campaign for Polio vaccination and eradication of child-killer diseases; non-governmental organizations in HIV/AIDS awareness; civil society organizations in voter education and mobilization; other activists in peace-building; women’s groups in fighting for gender equity and by environmentalist in highlighting environmental degradation. However, critical studies by scholars outside these participants are few and far between.

The Place of Theory

One of the gifts of Philosophy, that branch of knowledge that deals with human behavior and seeking to explain why and how we do what we do, is the emergence of ‘theory’. Theory being roughly approximated to

imply the confirmed ideas or patterns associated with a phenomenon. It has been argued that theory is needful as a deliberate effort to organize ideas by “bringing a measure of order out of the seeming chaos that confronts us. For it is through theorizing that we can hope to tease meaningful patterns out of the *endless* details and inordinate complexities that sustain world politics.” (Rosenau and Durfee, 2000: 2)

After a conference on ‘Theoretical Approaches to African Literature’ held at Bayreuth in 1990, the editors of the conference proceedings (Gugler, Lüsebrink and Martini, 1994) noted the importance of theory as embodying and taking meaning from the work of literature but observed the contradiction that little connection exists between theory and literature in Africa. They referred to other presenters at the conference who lamented like-wise. ‘Sunday Anozie speaks of the ‘critical inertia’ in African literary criticism. Simon Gikandi complains about the ‘acute poverty of theory’. Biodun Jeyifo concludes that the debates that have taken place over the last two decades ‘have been under-theorized’ (4). Jeyifo had at the same event warned us to be wary of ‘literary theories’ because they are conceived as purely Western exclusive where even Eastern ideas are considered primordial through the use of such delineations as ‘contemporary’ or ‘modern’ critical theories’ (18). Two decades later, it is fascinating to ask the question of the place of theory in African literature and creativity and still be puzzled that not much has changed.

However, theories cannot be jettisoned simply because of their origin and their tendency to exclude others in their formulation and configuration. It is precisely because the mind exists in all human communities that it can be argued that theories should be produced from all spheres of human life and activity. The process, as Appiah illustrates, involves seeing the need and knowing how to generate knowledge as theory. He says

So how do we develop and justify our scientific theories? The obvious answer is that scientists support their theories by gathering evidence... We then use the theory to make predictions and then we see, through experiment and observation, whether those predictions come out right. The process of gathering evidence and using it to justify general propositions is called ‘induction’ (158).

It is the absence of the ‘induction’ component in the African knowledge system that often leaves a gap that is equated with little or no knowledge production. We, therefore, use Applied Theater (AT) here to examine factors that impede the production of relevant knowledge in the several fledgling participatory theaters across Africa.

It would be odd therefore to talk about the absence of theorizing in a

theater practice that sprang from a firm theoretical basis. However, it is the perception of 'received' theories in the midst of vibrant practice that one questions the subtlety of the contradiction. Historically, the tendency to express ideological posturing without the framework of theory in Negritude, for example, undermined the movement. Leopold S. Senghor premised his arguments on an emotional design while seeking to anchor it on physical elements:

Who would deny that Africans, too, have a certain way of conceiving life and of living it? A certain way of speaking, singing and dancing; of painting and sculpturing, and even of laughing and crying? Nobody, probably; for otherwise we would not have been talking about 'Negro art'... What, then, is Negritude? It is—as you can guess from what precedes—the sum of the cultural values of the black world; that is, a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe (1994: 27–28).

To a large extent, the inability to tie down ideas to specifics that could characterize his conceived uniqueness of African art made it easy for critics and antagonists to tear Senghor's postulations to shreds. What we learn from this is that generalizations do not make good theories.

The Theory of Applied Theater

Applied Theater began from a theoretical platform. Nicholson reminds us that Boal, to whom several Theater for Development practices take root, remains the chief proponent of the practice, himself having been influenced by Bertolt Brecht. According to Nicholson:

Boal is possibly the most influential of contemporary theater practitioners – his reputation has been built on his work in disadvantaged communities across the world.... Boal is indebted to Brecht's analysis of the potential political dynamic between actors and target audiences, and he has sought to develop Brecht's construction of the 'popular' by encouraging audience members to take over the stage in a 'forum' – or performed debate – as part of the performance itself (25).

The implication here is the enormous capacity of AT to enlarge in form and content. It is logical to expect therefore that where an avalanche of AT practice exists, there would result an equally poignant conversation arising therefrom and bordering both on the nature and content of the practice.

Accepting this preposition would make Africa one of the world's most active sites for the experience, growth and innovation in Applied Theater.

The process of generating ideas seems 'conventional' to AT, because as Prendergast and Saxton argue, the theater is devised through a democratic process of "playbuilding," that ought to equally yield a far satisfying intended outcome. "It is the presentation that then becomes the stimulus for engagement with a larger community (the audience) about the issues and themes under investigation. This conversation itself leads to the broader possibility of potential sociopolitical revelation and/or change." (19) If the audience, facilitators as well as practitioners constitute tiers of engagement in producing ideas in AT, how well has this manifested in Africa?

Impairments to Theoretical Conceptions in African AT

Applied Theater in the mold of Theater for Development did not theoretically start from Africa. However, the nuances and context of Africa made it relatively easy to adopt the theater form for obvious benefits. One of its foremost practitioners, Oga Abah rightly locates that its appeal laid in its concern 'with, and derives its strength from participation. This is in opposition to the emphasis on consumerism of the arts/elite theater practice' (158). This emphasis on participation tallied with indigenous forms of theater and espoused the ideological motives of the AT practice thereby making it more accessible and acceptable. Moving from a concept that was unheard of, Tfd rapidly gained rapid followership across the continent and left in its wake varied experiments with the theater form. With popular acceptance and participation, what definite theoretical contribution can be gleaned from AT in the four decades of its adoption in Africa?

The Contented Receiver

One of the other acknowledged motivations for Boal's work was Paulo Freire's engagement with the adult education system in Brazil. From its beginning in 1954 in Brazil, the project was extended to Cuba and expanded to go beyond literacy programming to political education of voters. Cohen Cruz and Schutzman identify the fundamental stream running through the scope of Freire's system of 'education' as "his insistence on the inseparability of literacy education and social change underscores the danger of appropriating critical pedagogy for apolitical purposes." (2006: 34) Their analyses of Freire unveil a methodology and a radical philosophy, which neither can operate in isolation. Deborah Mutnick's example of John Dewey, a leader of progressive education in the early twentieth century, can be cited to illustrate the duality of methodology and social commitment. She says his perspective to work betrayed an inherently ideological outlook: "While

Dewey's philosophy corresponds with some goals of critical pedagogy, such as preparing students to participate in a democratic society, connecting critical thinking to experience, and viewing students as active learners, his perspective is decidedly liberal." (34)

It would appear then that some practitioners have adopted the Tfd methodology without the accompanying radical philosophy with its commitment to engendering change. This perhaps explains why much of the AT practices were driven by donor initiatives. When donors changed their priority, AT and AT practitioners simply followed suit. This mode of AT bestowed on the practitioner both the form and the content within which to practice. AT practice on this count failed to set the agenda and rather became the bandwagon that was driven through the social landscapes by economic forces. The well-known suspicion surrounding the ulterior motives of donors kept the issues outlined for AT to the superficial level rather than ennobling the people through open and altruistic engagement. Such a practice would hardly create forceful ideas about theater nor retain a persistent commitment to the goal of the practice.

'Theories for Theorists and Practice for Practitioners' Paradigm

Another argument that has been made for the absence of theorist-practitioners is that AT merely applies other disciplines and practitioners can never and should not claim or attempt to be experts in these borrowed fields. According to Thompson, the problem with that argument lies in the concept of the application of theater to other uses.

The *act of applying* takes the theatre practitioner or researcher into a number of different academic disciplines, social practices and research fields. The theatre engages with the discourses and approaches in these settings but cannot claim expertise in them. We will always be external to these changing and historically specific debates. Applied theatre comes to psychology, development and prison education... but cannot speak for or speak from those fields. We are only ever visitors within the disciplines into which we apply our theatre (2003: 21).

In his logic, the practitioners are invited into the prison, much in the same way an audience enters a theater. The practitioners are let out of the prison at the end of the encounter. Thompson argues that practitioners ought to familiarize themselves with the subject, setting and "theoretical debates that inform the practices in these places but instead, practitioners exercise that knowledge from a particular restricted position. "We are not expert in these areas nor should we seek to be. One of applied theatre's strengths is

in its status as the outsider, the visitor and the guest.” (20)

Plausible as the argument is presented, it poses the problem of conferring on the practitioner the role-player tag. Secondly, it contradicts Freire’s tenets of combining methodology with an ideological commitment to effective results. Nonetheless, this manner of thinking has influenced some practitioners who see themselves as theater-crats whose skills as technocrats are deployed for specific tasks and then let off afterwards. They do not perceive themselves to be part of the change expected to take place but are only active in the picture as a catalyst within the process. This, of course, would make the community view the practitioner with a certain level of suspicion as one who has no real stakes in the outcome of the process. It is hardly possible that in-depth study takes place in that insulated atmosphere where the practitioners are reluctant or afraid to insert themselves into the context of their work. Little or no fresh theoretical perspective would be expected from such distanced observer-practitioner.

The Problem of Unfinished Business

Africans have always wanted to take their destinies into their hands. This informed the political struggles for independence, peacefully negotiated by some countries and violently demanded in others. On the cultural front, there was also resistance to external dominance of the production modes in literature, music and theater from the intelligentsia who took up the role of animators in communities. Ngugi is quoted by Erven to have been quite aware of the potency of the theater facilitator in fast-tracking development in communities. He stated that such facilitators can contribute if they “manage to free themselves from limiting angles of visions, adopt an anti-imperialist stance, and demonstrate genuine concern for their African counterparts that goes beyond the pages of their next publication” (169). This was clearly the commitment with which Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Ngugi wa Mirii went into the community theater project in Kamiriithu and got the people to assess the development of their community and build a play from the scenarios advanced. The result was the famous *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, later translated and published as *I Will Marry When I Want*. The story often terminates with the grand performance and some of the observed behavioral changes that took place in the aftermath of the community work, including some men kicking the habit of alcoholism. Ngugi wa Thiong’o writes about the project glowingly:

When in 1977 I co-authored, with Ngugi wa Mirii, a play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, celebrating the fact that the ordinary people, and not outstanding individuals, are the makers of our history, I was arrested and placed in a maximum security prison. How dare I

write that about people and in a language that those very people could understand? When in 1982, we tried to perform another play, *Maitu Njugira*, again celebrating the same kind of history, the police closed the theatre where we were due to perform and later Moi sent three truckloads of armed policemen to raze to the ground the Kamiriithu open air theatre (192-3). The experiment with the people lasted a little over six years culminating with Ngugi wa Thiong'o going on exile for about three decades.

This is an instance in which a theater movement is physically terminated and thereby discontinuing the process of engagement with communities. Its greatest advantage was that its facilitators were writers capable of documenting their efforts and providing through their writings, a pattern for community engagement. We will never be able to know what would have happened had the Ngugis continued and sustained their work in Kamiriithu for three decades. Would the people have changed? Would the facilitators have been frustrated from within and outside the community to abandon their noble goals and task? Would the community have been transformed? What kind of transformation would the community have witnessed? Would the Kenyan Government have recognized the power of TfD and replicated such across the country? What impact would the experiment have made on the process and pattern of governance in Kenya? These questions remain in the realm of probability, as they would never be answered after the physical end of a practice that started vibrantly and held such high hopes. The Kamiriithu experience exemplifies a practice that has potential to make a grand contribution but before it does, it is uprooted and/or dislocated.

Storytelling and Narrative as end result

Perhaps this ranks highest among all the factors being enumerated for the absence of theorizing in TfD. First, because it is simple and at the same time logical. It is the narration of the process of the TfD engagement with a view to identifying points that are considered to be critical to the practitioner. Boon and Plaistow acknowledge the power of theory to drive TfD practice but were still persuaded to set the need for theorizing aside while commissioning writers for their important book of theater and community empowerment. They asked the writers essentially to describe and discuss their own experiences in the field. As editors to a collection on TfD practices, they stated that:

We brought no overarching theoretical agenda to the task of gathering material; nor did we insist that our contributors locate their work within particular theoretical traditions or paradigms. We do not

for a moment underestimate the importance of theory, and indeed hope that the practices discussed here will contribute to the development of theoretical understanding, but this is not a book which seeks to describe ‘practice-as-example-of-theory’. There are already a number of texts which seek to fulfill that particular function.’ (2)

They justified their approach by stating that they were far more interested in the “diversity of motivations, ideas, perspectives and approaches, and ways of describing and accounting for them, which can be incorporated into and debated within – practice.” (2)

The African tradition of oral narrative agrees with this approach and may also account for its popularity among Tfd practitioners. Many do not document their works at all. Few document their works in audiovisual forms. Those who do write about their works are often satisfied with a narration of the highlights they consider to be important. Therefore, their effort stops at the point that they should potentially be making a contribution to knowledge. However, the absence of critical discourse has left much of what had been experienced as Tfd under-reported, under-researched and under-written. When practitioners are not bothered about critically examining their practice, we miss the point of the patterns, explanation and justification for the continued usage of the Tfd methodology.

The Piper and the Master’s Voice

The politics of funding which has contributed in no small measure to the growth of Tfd in scope and operation has incidentally also posed stumbling blocks to theorizing about the work they commission practitioners to do. The power of the donor suggests that when donors give money for a campaign, they do not expect the theater practitioner to take the money and use it for the purposes of formulating or testing hypotheses and theories. The goal for the Tfd practice is always tailored to achieving the objective(s) set by the donor. At times, this can subvert even the role of the community as participants, the very heart of Tfd. It is true that funders will keep only the part of Tfd that supports their objective. This diminishes the role of the theater practitioner but Brodzinski argues that though, “funders’ criteria may relate to policy objectives rather than artistic merit, in practice there is a recognition that without compelling drama the audience will disengage – switching off ...” (88-89). It is safe to eliminate theorizing as a term of reference in donor driven Tfd work.

Missed or Miscued Learning Curves

Emelda Samba, a lecturer from the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon took a group of graduate students for a series of workshops with

disabled children at Etoug-ebe in Yaoundé. These were children abandoned by their families who could not cope with the financial and other burdens of caring for the children. Emelda Samba was used to using the problem-posing approach where participants are asked to analyze their problems and thereafter build plays to express what was researched. She, however, found that approach limited when one of the children with disability objected to playing the role of a disabled person anymore. She perceived that the children had been made through the process of play making and role-playing to re-live their continuing frustration. Samba then asked what roles they would rather play and the children named several dignifying roles such as that of a 'Medical Doctor', 'Politician', 'Nurse', etc. but not the role of a disabled person. According to Samba, that was when she "started thinking, instead of using this problem-posing method in the field, I should move on to something else – the appreciative Inquiry method (in Petterer 2010)." This was a moment of epiphany by a committed Tfd practitioner and like with most engagements, learning takes place, opening new vistas through which both participants and facilitators can move to new levels of enlightenment. Samba immediately sees the limitation of her learnt methodology and theories and serendipitously stumbles on a new idea. However, she does not pursue the lead offered by the great opportunity.

This incidence is not unique to Samba, as many Tfd practitioners would agree. The opportunity to make contribution to scholarship, theater methodology and perhaps theory is often thrown away because this seldom constitutes part of the objectives of any Tfd enterprise. In some instances, such opportunities are not recognized at all as the chance to move to new frontiers. In the above scenario, it would have been necessary to further probe the preference of children and how that represented their aspirations. It would have then led to the discussion whether allowing participants to devise plays on their aspiration in life would equally be empowering. Samba, it could be deduced, is aware of this when she named the yet to be articulated concept with a positive slant – the Appreciative Inquiry method. This leaves a positive expectation in the mind of the reader but also leaves much more work to be done by the Tfd practitioner; whether or not the latter takes up the task remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The aim of identifying some of the impediments to theorizing Tfd in Africa is not to imply that theorizing is impossible. Rather, it is to draw attention to the need to actively engage in critical discussion of the vibrant culture of engaging with communities through Tfd. Perhaps along teaching students the methodology, curriculum in universities should include

the aspect of theory as the driving force for new learning and new frontiers for Tfd. The advantage of doing so is that it would help set the agenda for what ought to be a priority for the practitioners. As theater looks for ways in which it can be further applied to the complex issues in society, theorizing about the work that has been done thus far and continues to be done may well help to shape the way into the future.

Works Cited

- Abah, Oga S. 'Creativity, Participation and Change in Theatre for Development Practice' *The Performance Arts in Africa: A Reader*. Harding, F. (ed.) London: Routledge, 2002.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Thinking it Through: An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy*, Oxford: University Press, 2003
- Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. *The Practice of Social Research*, Oxford: University Press, 2001.
- Boon, Richard and Plaistow, Jane. *Theatre and Empowerment: Community Drama on the World Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Brodzinski, Emma. *Theatre in Health and Care*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Cohen-Cruz, Jan and Mady Schutzman. *A Boal Companion: Dialogue on Theatre and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge,.
- Etherton, Michael. *The Development of African Drama*. London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1982.
- Gugler, Josef et al. (eds) *Literary Theory and African Literature*, Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1994.
- Jeyifo, Biodun. 'Literary Theory and Theories of Decolonization' *Literary Theory and African Literature*. Josef Gugler et al. (eds.) Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1994.
- Mutnick, Deborah. 'Pedagogy: Critical Interventions: The Meaning of Praxis' *A Boal Companion: Dialogue on Theatre and Cultural Politics*. Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman (eds.). New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Moving The Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, London: James Currey, 1993.
- Nicholson, Helen. *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Prendergast, Monica and Juliana Saxton. *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice*. Chicago: Intellect, 2009.
- Rohrer, Finlo. "How dangerous is South Africa?" BBC News Magazine, 14 May 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/8668615.stm. Accessed 12 June 2016.
- Rosenau, James N. and Mary Durfee. *Thinking Theory Thoroughly: Coherent Approaches to an Incoherent World*. Oxford: Westview, 2000.
- Patterer, Natalie. *Le Cameroun Sur Scene – Theatre and Development Cameroun* (a documentary film) http://www.onlinefilm.org/de_DE/film/54423, 2010.

Accessed August 2016.

Senghor, Leopold Sedar. "Negritude: A humanism of the twentieth century." In *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.) New York: Columbia University Press, 1990/1994.

Thompson, James. *Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003.

Van Erven, Eugene. *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2001

CHAPTER 14

The Protest Theatrical Space in Twenty-first Century Social Media Oriented Africa

*Re-assessing Bole Butake's **And Palm wine will Flow** (1990) and Athol Fugard's **Sizwe Bansi is Dead** (2014).*

Irmagard Anchang Langmia

The structure of social media taught Egyptians that space exists that you can call your own, your space, where you can speak your mind. (Abdulla 2011: 45)

According to Paul Allain and Jen Harvie “Theatre is one part of the broad spectrum that is known as performance” (2006: 208) and protest theater constitutes one part of such performance theater. In a 21st Century media oriented Africa, protest theater has taken on new communication dimensions that involve the use of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter to influence political revolutions. I argue that this “protest theater” is a form of artistic or revolutionary performance that carries political undertones in usually specified locations. Such locations involve places like buildings which constitute in-house spaces or street arenas which are out-house spaces. Meantime, the notion of political revolutions perceived as artistic practice in in-house and out-house theatrical spaces have existed in Africa since its cultural origins prior to European colonialism till present. Allain and Harvie further argue that “the theatre as a practice or form of artistic work is usually bound by the events or play-texts which it mainly comprises at any given time” (ibid). This implies that protest theater constitutes ‘theater as practice bound’ by events like political revolutions that usually shape its occurrence. Within a South African Apartheid political context, Jan Cohen Cruz quotes “Peter Larlham’s argument that funerals of anti-apartheid activists in the townships during the 1970s and 1980s were the most compelling instances of anti-apartheid street performance” (Blumberg and Walder 1999:11) in out-house spaces. In 21st Century African political arenas, activists have

remodeled these forms of street protest by including social media communication tools that inform persons about the political events in their lives. I consider this sort of political space that utilizes social media tools to inform about political democratization processes as protest theatrical space. The purpose is to combat non-democratic governance that does not cater for the voices of the oppressed. Certainly, anti-democracy demonstrations in street arenas have created opportunities for 21st Century African rioters to continue voicing discontent during periods of protest more in out-house political spaces than in-house. Yet, it must be acknowledged that in-house theater still continues to drive and impact political change in Africa. Augusto Boal aptly describes the common link between theater and politics when he states “The argument about the relations between theater and politics is as old as theater and [...] as politics” (2000: xxv) and there is an increasing attraction to out-house more than in-house theatrical spaces that are politically motivated. Thus, in both in-house and out-house protest performance spaces, social media communication platforms have greatly provided these alternate out-house theatrical spaces, thereby, altering the tone of socio-political activism in some African nations like Egypt and Burkina Faso. Otherwise, it is imperative that we understand social media’s influence in 21st Century African political spaces and the reasons why oppressed masses’ interest in in-house protest theater stands challenged by it.

Background

Social media communication gadgets emerged in Africa at the apex of the late 20th Century into the 21st Century. In the 1990s, cell phones and Internet cafés were quite uncommon. In Cameroon, people used phone booths to make phone calls nationally and internationally on high cost landline telephones. TV, print media, and radio were sources of news while people sent letters by post office mail. However, at the onset of the present century, a plethora of social media tools has emerged in global spaces. Cell/smart phones have become more common. Means of communication have become easier with more Internet cafés available for people with no home access to the Internet. Most importantly, Africa has joined the world in accessing social media global entertainment spaces that include its own protest theatrical traditional and non-traditional spaces. Paul Allain and Jen Hervie argue that Augusto Boal “Throughout his life [...] consistently attempted to demonstrate that theatrical action has the potential to make a social and political impact.” (2014: 33) In contemporary Africa, I argue that such ‘theatrical action’ effects radical political change more in out-house than in-house protest theatrical spaces. Consequently, due to challenges posed by the explosive emergence of 21st Century social media communication tools

that provide alternate out-house theatrical outlets to African indigenous consumers, the role of in-house protest theater in media oriented Africa needs to be re-assessed. The purpose of this reassessment is to fit it within a contemporary social media [Marxist] sphere that persistently challenges its vision for the future.

Analysis of Dual Theatrical Models

Since Egypt's 'Tahrir Square', the explosive emergence of social media gadgets is creating a new theatrical phenomenon that is gripping Africa and re-shaping its vision for posterity in the 21st Century. It is the effect of social media on African traditional and non-traditional protest theatrical spaces enhanced by the availability of technological platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, and even Netflix. From Tunisia to Egypt, Burkina Faso, and to Senegal, social media effect on out-house political uprisings, fueled by social class disparities are gaining grounds and in some cases affecting democratic change where in-house theater has not succeeded. Besides, this new phase in Africa's political revolutions is fast re-shaping peoples' theater entertainment choices from a political perspective. However, this is quite challenging for the survival of traditional in-house protest theater since it now has to compete with non-traditional out-house theatrical outlets in street arenas in terms of audience attraction. In re-assessing protest theater's role in media oriented Africa then, two theatrical models come into focus.

The first model is traditional in-house protest theatrical space. Here, the scripted plays [play-text] of authors are dramatized before live audiences on stage for entertainment purposes, yet, the undertone is political. Augusto Boal reiterates this political undertone of all performance theater when he states "All theatre is necessarily political because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them" (2000: x). Accordingly, African in-house protest theater is not excluded from Boal's politicization concept since protest plays are usually a critical dramatization of the plight of the oppressed classes in African society. The second model is non-traditional out-house electro-riot street theatrical space. This theater type uses social media tools to influence political revolutions in open arena out-house spaces like streets. As tools of communication, social media are electronically available to ethno-global viewers who access through platforms like Facebook and Twitter, become influenced by its ideology of pursuing political change, and respond to its dictum through mass uprisings in ways that enforce democratic change. Examples are the Arab Spring Uprisings and Harmattan Uprisings that have increasingly challenged the role of in-house protest theater in 21st Century Africa using as modus political revolutions.

Influence of Arab Spring and Harmattan Spring Uprisings in Protest Theatrical Space

Meanwhile, it is important to understand how out-house protest theatrical space has attracted more dissatisfied masses than in-house protest theatrical space using political revolutions as a weapon of angry mass appeal. The Arab Spring Uprisings and the Harmattan Uprisings are political revolutions that took place in the Middle East and Africa beginning in 2011. What was most prominent about these revolutions was the use of social media to engage indigenes in the democratization process in respective nations where the revolutions took place. These uprisings, key architects of political revolutions against authoritarian regimes, first started in Tunisia on January 14, 2011. It spread to other countries like Egypt within these Arab peripheries. In Tunisia, a mass political revolution demanding democratic change was sparked by the death of a 26-year-old street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi. Bouazizi, an underprivileged Tunisian fruit seller, set himself on fire in front of a government building in the town of Sidi Bouzid. He was protesting against a slap from an angry policewoman because he had refused to give up his fruit cart (NPR Staff). In the aftermath of Bouazizi's death, Tunisian protesters stormed the streets given that his death was an "act of desperation [that] resonated immediately with others in the town. [In addition], protests began that day in Sidi Bouzid, captured by cellphone cameras and shared on the Internet" (NPR Staff). An immediate ramification resulting from this political revolution was the ousting of long-term Tunisian president, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. He fled the country on January 14, 2011, signaling regime change in Tunisia. This is one example of a political revolution that succeeds partly due to the virality of social media influence on out-house electro-riot theatrical space. Likewise, the 2011 Tunisian revolution ushered in a democratic process and elections for a constituent government were held on October 23, 2011 (NPR Staff). Other similar Arab Spring Uprisings took place in Egypt. The government of President Hosni Mubarak was overthrown on 11 February 2011 through street riots, protests, and events at Tahrir Square, all, captured on Twitter and Facebook. This also signaled a regime change that witnessed the rise of a pro-Islamist democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi in June 2012. Libya witnessed a similar overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi with street protests and a civil war that started on February 15, 2011. Other protests for political reform started in Syria on 26 January 2011 and have turned into a full-fledged civil war that has witnessed the dramatic rise of an extreme Islamic jihadist movement known as ISIS. In the case of Syria, there is no regime change and president Bashar Al-Assad has held onto power steadily. As a result, the influence of social media in Syrian electro-riot theatrical space has not yielded a

democratic process as is the case with Egypt and Burkina Faso.

Other political revolutions have also taken place in out-house electro-riot theatrical spaces in Africa. The Harmattan Uprisings erupted in Burkina Faso in October 2014. This uprising was best communicated on Twitter besides mainstream local TV and radio in Burkina Faso. It was a fiery political revolution that witnessed the overthrow of 27-year long president Blaise Compaore through a series of street riots and demonstrations because he attempted to change the state constitution and prolong his tenure in office. Basia Cummings in "Burkina Faso's Revolution 2.0" examines how government officials, rioters, and others in Burkina Faso posted developments about this political uprising on social media using Twitter for instance. One example is that of Aisha Dabo @ mashafrican which reads with this hashtag "#Burkina is the army stepping in to topple Compaore, confusing reports" (Cummings 2014). Another example of a tweet with a hashtag is that of Joe Penny that reads "Saw military firing on protesters in front of Blaise Compaore's house and in front of the presidency #Burkina #1wili" (Cummings). Consequently, all these countries – Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Burkina Faso – have respectively experienced the Arab Spring Uprisings and Harmattan Uprisings. Yet, one thing remains certain: The mass movement of contemporary protest theatrical space from in-house to out-house using new techno-oriented communication platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook is not certainly culled from the play-text of a given writer. Thus, the role of in-house protest theater serving as a locus for the performance of protest plays in twenty-first century Africa, is increasingly challenged by social media modifications to the way that contemporary Africa responds to political revolutions in out-house rather than in-house spaces.

Once more the political revolution in Egypt's Tahrir Square, impacted by social media gadgets comes into focus. Tahrir Square continues to epitomize a non-traditional microcosmic performance theater in twenty-first century open space in ways that differ from its South Africa twentieth century model: the inclusion of social media gadgets to bolster global communication between persons involved in a democratization process in places like Egypt through radical mass political rallies advocating regime change. In this out-house space, the riot grounds of Tahrir Square become a sociopolitical protest environment where people socialize physically and electronically, sleep in protest, perform music as well as fully engage in political rallies. Thus, twenty-first century theatrical space is no longer confined to protest play-texts performed in in-house theater buildings where conscientizing takes place. Rather, it expands to social interactions between persons on Facebook and Twitter. Through social media platforms like Facebook, an activist like Egypt's Wael Ghonim takes on a leadership role and drives the radical political dialogue at Tahrir Square in 2011. In addition, strategies

to combat oppressive regimes are used to educate using political slogans in these social media so oppressed masses can continuously stay involved in the democratization process. Tahrir Square symbolically becomes a location where violence erupts between oppressed people and forces of law and order. Consequently, political theater in out-house electro-riot space is transformed in 21st Century Africa because of these social media impacts and usually the person that champions the cause of the oppressed people is not a play director but an oppressed individual that takes on a leadership role. Wael Gonim led the Egyptian revolution at Tahrir Square using Facebook as a weapon of mass propaganda appeal in out-house rather than in-house protest theatrical space.

Re-assessing the Role of Protest Theater through Play-texts

Two play-texts come into Marxist perspective when re-assessing the role of in-house protest theatrical performance. The first play-text is Bole Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow* first performed at Amphi 700 on the campus of the Yaoundé University in 1990. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue that "every class struggle is a political struggle" (2012: 10) and African in-house protest theatrical performance, I contend, represents a class struggle between the privileged and the under-privileged classes in fictional sociopolitical spaces. Applying this Marxist ideology to an African context, the case of 1990s Cameroon in-house protest theater comes into focus through Bole Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow*.

This play is set within the context of the 1990s political antagonism between government and the opposition, and between the privileged and the underprivileged classes in Cameroon. Bole Butake's *And Palm Wine will Flow* speaks to a microcosmic fictional stage performance of a political revolution in 1990s Cameroon. Butake reenacts a local political uprising in a corrupt traditional kingdom fuming in the decadence of dictatorship under the Fon Ewawa. Through an empowered cultic women's revolution, Shey Ngong, the Tapper (Kibaranko), and Kwengong, the people of the Fondom overcome their oppressors. The Fon's palace is burnt down and he loses his life in the incident. Power returns to the people as the Tapper concludes "No more shall we allow/ One person to rule our land for us!" (Butake 54). The people's revolution triumphs in the Kingdom of Ewawa in Butake's literary in-house protest theatrical piece. His play, though meant to entertain audiences, carries deep political undertones that critique corruption and authoritarian rule, depicting their nefarious consequences on the future of societies.

Yet, the larger picture articulates a simultaneous 1990s pro-democracy revolution in Cameroon at the same time that Butake's play was first staged.

Student riots, mass opposition rallies, the emergence of a multiparty revolution that witnessed the rise of the Social Democratic Front as one of many political opposition parties demanded that power be returned to the people through democratic change. Butake's fictional play conscientized audiences about socioeconomic and political injustice in in-house protest theatrical space. Moreover, the political satire evoked in the play during in-house performance in 1990 drew more of thunderous applause and hilarious clapping from the audience, rather than a political revolt. Certainly, Butake's play, unlike other non-political plays, suffered media censorship because of its politically driven message that was conveyed at a time when Cameroon was experiencing a political revolution. However, other non-political plays like Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* performed by the same students of the Yaoundé University was broadcast on Cameroon Radio and Television, while Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow* was not broadcast on Cameroon TV in 1990.

Certainly, in 1990s Cameroon, communication using social media tools was an elusive dream. People in Cameroon in the 1990s mostly made phone calls in public telephone booths since social media were non-existent. To even think that students of the University of Yaoundé 1 could own cell phones was hardly possible at that time since such technology was not yet available in Cameroon and most parts of the world.

As a consequence, there is no doubt that Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow* may have inflamed students' thoughts with revolutionary ideas. It could also have motivated students to take to the streets in protest. However, the effect could not have been massive as what social media achieves in protests of the 2000s in African out-house electro-riot revolutionary spaces. Butake's play did not benefit from the effectiveness of social media avenues like tweeting, blogging, texting, and Facebook. The play's role then in the late twentieth century was to use a fictional play to point to the excesses of Cameroon's democratic process. In assessing the role of Butake's play in a twenty-first century media oriented Africa, one can contend that it still serves two main motives: entertain and politically conscientize audiences.

The second play performed in traditional in-house protest theatrical space is Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972). This play is anti-apartheid both in form and content. It articulates the struggle for freedom and the quest for identity by blacks in Apartheid South Africa through the fictional characters Styles and Sizwe Bansi. Samuel Okoronkwo Chukwu Okoronkwo argues that Apartheid in South Africa imposed appalling heavy burdens on blacks in South Africa thereby creating a deep gap between wealthy whites and impoverished black masses (2011:18). Consequently, this play performed in in-house theatrical space aims to create political awareness about the ills of the South African society and as Okoronkwo corroborates "redirect... the

consciousness of the black South Africans towards their sufferings and the urgency with which to take their fate in their own hands” (2011: 23). Like Butake’s play, the goal of Fugard’s plays is to conscientize but to do so for oppressed black masses in Apartheid South Africa.

Fugard’s play is more social media exposed than Butake’s play *And Palmwine will Flow* given that it has been re-adapted and re-mobilized using social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to attract more audiences in out-house protest theatrical spaces. While the play has informed South Africans about their political plight and ideologically influenced political revolutions, it contributed but did not necessarily as a single protest play to dismantle Apartheid in South Africa despite its continuous appeal to audiences that still watch the play in theaters and electronic YouTube platforms.

Critics like Deon Opperman have asserted the role that theater – and specifically protest theater – played in the democratization process in South Africa. Opperman examines theater not only as source of entertainment to audiences in in-house [protest] theatrical spaces. He also asserts its powerful role in a political revolution that shaped South Africa’s culture of defiance against Apartheid in uprisings like Soweto’s in 1976 as follows:

This uprising of children in South Africa’s black townships took place in a context of cultural resistance that had developed over the preceding decade and a half. Building on... theatrical practices of autonomy, accommodation, and opposition that had developed by the time of the Soweto rising, a theater of resistance and revolution flourished until February 1990 (1993:1).

These uprisings, for the most part, took place in out-house locations. There were no social media outlets to influence these political anti-Apartheid uprisings in 1990s South Africa. However, what is certain is that plays performed in both in-house and out-house locations have for the most part in Africa served as a revolutionary weapon for conscientization. Its goal has always been to solicit regime change from countries that have not democratized as was the case with Apartheid South Africa before 1990. However, in the 21st Century, new social media have bolstered these political revolutions in out-house electro-riot political spaces. Consequently, in-house theatrical appeal continuously stands challenged by its ability to attract more discontented, oppressed masses in out-house protest theatrical space than in-house where protest plays are performed. It took South Africa more than five decades to use both in-house and out-house protest theatrical space as a conscientizing weapon to dismantle Apartheid in the 20th Century. No social media influences like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube existed in South

Africa in the 1990s, but for telephone, radio, and television. However, in contemporary Africa, the use of social media in electro-riot political spaces has, for the most part, re-energized these oppressed masses. These masses have turned out in numbers on street arenas to solicit democratic change in some countries in the 2000s using social media outlets and they have succeeded to effect regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, and Burkina Faso. Nevertheless, not all countries that have used social media outlets to solicit regime change in Africa have succeeded. These same tools have not effected regime change in Burundi and currently the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Post-Apartheid, Ian Steadman in “Theater Beyond Apartheid” critically re-evaluates South Africa from an evolving, political perspective. He argues that anti-Apartheid plays were broadly conceived on the notion of a “motive force [that conveyed] its reaction to Apartheid” (Steadman 1991: 77) and Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is one of such plays. As such, “Anti-Apartheid plays like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *The Island*, *Survival*, *Egoli*, *The Hungry Earth*, *Woza Albert!*, *Bopha!*, *Asinamali*—and many others were representations of:

“black,” protest,” and “resistance” theater [and the]... “development of a conventional relationship between subject matter and style of presentation in [this theater type] ... effectively thrust the subject matter of Apartheid into the consciousness of audiences worldwide and became tacitly accepted by audiences (Ibid)

However, it is not only worldwide audiences that embraced this consciousness of Apartheid derived from protest performance plays in South African theater in the 1990s. The Apartheid government of President Frederik Willem de Klerk also embraced this consciousness when he dismantled Apartheid in South Africa in 1990 and released from jail a political prisoner of conscience, Nelson Mandela. Yet, there were no social media outlets like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter that propelled this democratization process in South Africa in the 20th Century unlike its presence in 21st Century out-house political revolutionary spaces like Burkina Faso’s. Thus, traditional in-house protest theatrical plays like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *the Island*, and *Egoli* encapsulate a “motive force” (ibid) that influenced and contributed towards a democratization process in South Africa beginning on 2 February 1990, when social media was not yet available. Though I concede that Fugard’s play contributed towards a democratization process in 1990s South Africa, the political inferences in this play did not constitute the main reason why South African President Frederik De Klerk and his pro-Apartheid regime ended Apartheid in February 1990.

More than forty years after Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was first produced in Apartheid South Africa in 1972, Donald Gilpin reminisces

over his view of a reproduction of the play at McCarter's Berlind Theater at Princeton University, New Jersey in February 2015. He expresses memorable thoughts about the play in these words:

I remember feeling the political tension at that time. There was the sense that this controversial play was doing something dangerous. Mr. Kani who played the role of Styles in the original and has directed this production with his son Atandwa Kani as Styles here, and Mr. Ntshona had, surprisingly in 1974, been allowed to travel outside of South Africa., but only with the official designation as servants to Mr. Fugard. After a subsequent performance of the play in South Africa, Mr. Kani and Mr. Ntshona were jailed for 23 days (Gilpin 2015: 1).

Evidently, the dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa and the election of Nelson Mandela as the first black President in 1994 indicate that Fugard's plays no longer serve as a political threat when performed by a black theatrical troupe post- Apartheid.

Various versions of Fugard's play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* can easily be assessed in YouTube spaces. An example of a YouTube version of the play is the one directed by Mathew Xia. In this video, audiences that watched *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* directed by Mathew Xia (Eclipse Theater Company/Young Vic co-production in 2014) hilariously react to it as they exit the theater in London with these words: "Terrific performance," "comic," "dramatic," "It is so moving that it is hard to describe," "thought provoking," "Tour de force," "brilliant," "acting amazing" (Xia). Blurbs about the play further read "A fine revival of a classic: The Metro," and "A spiky Apartheid Masterpiece: Timeout," and "A gripping triumph: The Daily Telegraph" (Xia). Jane Plastow argues that "theatre has been enormously influential [in] voic[ing] opposition to repression and betrayal of the people by the state" (1996: 6). In Fugard's case, the continuing in-house theatrical performance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* in post-Apartheid South Africa informs of new social media outlets like YouTube, Facebook, blogs, and Twitter that communicate the play to wider audiences for this purpose. Unequivocally, Plastow's assertion corroborates the play's contemporary social media role: to inform about opposition to Apartheid— as part of South Africa's literature fictionalized in performance plays – to 21st Century global viewers and posterity for education-entertainment purposes.

The second protest model is out-house non-traditional electro-riot street theatrical space. This theatrical model challenges the survival of in-house protest theatrical performance from a political perspective because of the influence of twenty-first century social media communication gadgets. It is

also non-entertainment focused. Egypt's Tahrir Square symbolically marks this digital alternate theatrical pattern emerging in Africa's political uprisings: The ability of social media tools like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to effectively bolster twenty-first century political upheavals in Africa effecting democratic change where in-house theater has scarcely succeeded. The tendency for these oppressed masses has been to rise up in revolt against their oppressors and their political institutions and to demand democratic reform using social media communication tools. Thus, the ability of social media to galvanize mass populations in open arenas succeeds with Egypt's Arab Spring Uprising (2011) and Burkina Faso's [Democratic] Harmattan Uprising (2014). Furthermore, the success of political revolutions that use social media tools to solicit democratic change highlight the need for in-house protest theater to redefine its role in a new media oriented Africa where electro-riot street theatrical spaces continuously attract more domestic discontented voices, dominate, and effect democratic change.

The Egyptian social media activist Wael Ghonim remains the most renowned face behind the 2011 Facebook/Twitter revolution in Egypt that successfully ousted Hosni Mubarak using electro-riot street theatrical spaces. In using social media to organize the Egyptian revolution, Ghonim and other Egyptians activists ensured that "venues for demonstrations" (Abdulla 2011: 48) in Egypt during the January 25, 2011 uprisings "listed all the major squares in every Egyptian governorate where they expected people to gather, [instructing on] ... what to wear, what to take with you, and who to contact in times of trouble" (Ibid). Abdulla further states that during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, "Twitter enabled activists to keep an eye on each other. Some managed to tweet 'arrested' or 'taken by police' before their mobile phones were confiscated (49). This evidences the use of social media as a conscientizing tool in the Egyptian revolution. Ghonim's Facebook slogan "Kullena Khaled Said" (Grovtz 2011: 2) which means "we are all Khaled Said," (2), rife with political undertones, also "attracted some 500,000 members" (2) on the dawn of an Egyptian revolution in 2011. This slogan motivated thousands of Egyptian protesters who joined the revolution at Tahrir Square. Some activists and protesters even signed on Ghonim's Facebook page to acknowledge their intention to participate in the demonstrations. His goal was to raise awareness about the unjust brutal killing by government forces of a 28-year-old Egyptian man using electro-riot street performance theatrical space as opposed to in-house protest theatrical space with scripted text. Consequently, the simultaneous interaction of social media tools with political action in electro-riot theatrical spaces in Egypt symbolically speaks to the thriving of alternate protest theatrical media outlets that attract more mass demonstrators than in-house theater in 21st Century Africa.

Meantime, the increasing growth of Africa's movie industry from the 1980s till present provides an alternative entertainment outlet to indigenous consumers that are non-political and movie theater oriented. An example is Nigeria's Nollywood movie industry. In 2016, Nollywood boasted a vast number of African online movie viewers on YouTube channels like Irokotv, XnollyTV, AfoRevo.com, Nollywoodbest, and African Movie Magic channel, besides others. This places 21st Century in-house protest theatrical performance as a source of entertainment on a competitive basis with African movies online based on the mass interest that they attract. Consequently, in reconfiguring the role of African in-house protest theatrical space in the African democratization process, the need to continue digitalizing its performance outlets using social media communication gadgets should be reinforced. Through the use of these electronic tools, in-house protest theatrical performance will contribute its share to activist political democratization processes in 21st Century Africa.

In the case of Cameroon, while in-house protest theatrical spaces still attract audiences, other outlets like cabarets, music, and dance constitute alternate entertainment spaces that attract audiences too. In the 2000s, the role of theatrical space in Cameroon specifically in Anglophone regions like Bamenda and Buea is increasingly not limited to the performance of traditional protest theatrical plays. Events like weddings and other cultural activities also take place in spaces like the Congress Hall in Bamenda, the Cultural Center in Bamenda and the Alliance Franco-Camerounaise Center in Buea where traditional protest plays are usually performed. Meanwhile, a political perspective on out-house non-traditional theatrical space on Cameroon stands in stark contrast with its Burkina Faso counterpart in the 2000s. Burkina Faso's 2014 political revolution that was successfully mobilized through social media influence in out-house electro-riot space ushered in a democratic process with the ousting of former president Blaise Compaore. In contrast with Burkina Faso, political revolutions in Cameroon in out-house electro-riot political spaces have not yielded a regime change. However, political revolutions in Cameroon have to a certain extent influenced political reform. A multiparty system of governance was created in Cameroon in 1990 because an upsurge of opposition parties' political demands from the government in power forced the government to adopt changes. The Social Democratic Front of Ni John Fru Ndi took center stage in the 1990s political demonstrations in out-house political arenas though social media tools were not yet available to influence political revolutions at that time. Even in the 2000s, with the presence of social media outlets, political revolution in out-house electro-riot political spaces have not succeeded in Cameroon. However, these revolutions have partly influenced a remodel of the parliamentary system in Cameroon. The first is through the

active functioning of the senate. The president signed into law in 1996 and practically implemented in Cameroon's National Assembly in 2013 when he named Marcel Niat Njifenji first president of the senate in parliament. Once more, Bole Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow* represents a fictional ideological demand for political change in (Cameroon's) in-house theatrical space in the 1990s and beyond. Evolving from the 1990s in Cameroon and moving into the 2000s, in-house protest theatrical space is still active specifically on university campuses like the University of Yaoundé where Butake's *And Palmwine will Flow* was first performed. However, the passionate intensity with which entertainment audiences within and outside university campuses were attracted to such politically motivated in-house performance plays in the 1990s when social media gadgets were not largely available has waned. Even if the state media, CRTV or other TV channels in Cameroon or YouTube were to show these protest plays audience interest in them serve more as entertainment even though they can still influence political ideology. Besides, other current entertainment outlets like Nollywood movies and electronic media platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook, Linked In, Instagram, Twitter, mobile phones, and YouTube have greatly increased communication between people thereby increasing the availability of alternate entertainment outlets for users. Thus, the survival of in-house protest theatrical space stands challenged based on the constant reshaping of people's interest choices in-house performance plays in a country like Cameroon. This is based on the influence of and availability of increasing alternate social media interactive tools for communication in out-house spaces.

In the case of South Africa, the country is experiencing an artistic outburst of multiple theatrical entertainment outlets that are not exclusively geared towards protest in the twenty-first century. During Apartheid, one of the goals of the market theater was to "attract and address both white and black audiences, a revolutionary objective in an era when segregation was still largely enforced" (Allain and Hervie 2006: 66). Post-1992, the new phase of the theatrical performance in South Africa is no longer dominated by protest theatrical outlets though Market Theatre still exists as the voice of the oppressed classes. Deon Opperman acknowledges that post-apartheid, "Protest Theater had in one swoop been robbed of its primary target" (1993: 13), implying a shift in theatrical performance outlets that are not protest focused. Certainly, other theatrical entertainment outlets include cabaret, dance, music, stand-up comedy, Broadway, and opera houses. Meantime, violent xenophobic street-riots still reflect the political nuances that characterize perennial life in impoverished parts of South Africa where class struggle still persists. However, it is certain that this post-Apartheid nation has a new vision for the future of South African theater that includes protest

theater. Currently, they have the Barnyard Theatre, On Broadway, Cape Town Theatre, The National Children's Theatre, National Arts Festival Theatre, and Market Theatre, Johannesburg each looking for new ways to adjust to a post-Apartheid South Africa. In re-iterating its role as a source of interactive communication, social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and YouTube greatly contribute in altering the way that the populace reacts to traditional and non-traditional performance in theatrical spaces that address domestic discontent in 21st Century Africa for two major reasons.

First, alternate protest theatrical venues like electro-riot street theatrical spaces in open arenas are attracting more discontented masses in twenty-first century Africa. This articulates the message that even though in-house protest theater's ideology serves as political tools for education and entertainment, it also informs people about the political plight of discontented masses. Yet, what in-house protest theater does not practically do is influence political revolutions in 21st Century Africa in ways that unseat dictatorial regimes as is the case with Egypt and Burkina Faso's political revolutions that have succeeded in out-house spaces. Evidence points to the fact that political uprisings in contemporary Africa succeed more in out-house theatrical electro-riot street arenas than in in-house stage performance spaces. South African critic Sifiso Maseko responds to critics who posit the death of theater, and I argue, traditional in-house protest theater, when he states "The word going around is that theatre is dead. What has really died, however, is protest theatre [...] The good news is that street theatre [...] revives the tradition of taking theatre to the people" (qtd. in Blumberg and Walder 1999: 11). Evidently, out-house theater in 21st century Africa takes a leap ahead of its in-house counterpart by using social media communication tools to influence mass political uprisings in electro-riot theatrical spaces like street arenas in 21st Century Africa. Most importantly, the uses of social media in out-house electro-riot theatrical spaces and its influence on political democratization processes in Africa has come to stay, whether they succeed in triggering revolutions or not.

Secondly, viewer interest in traditional in-house protest theater though still alive, needs to be maintained. The works of playwrights ought to be continuously performed in-house so the educative richness of a moral *politicism* that targets oppressed masses does not wane. However, to attract more viewer interests, these plays need to be revived by taking scripted plays out of in-house theaters to social media outlets like WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Netflix. Through this exposure, traditional in-house protest theatrical spaces will attract more audiences. It will also create more global awareness about the plight of oppressed people in African nations where authoritarian rule prevails as is the current case with Burundi's political turmoil since June 2015.

Conclusion

Communication avenues of the new social media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have certainly remodeled responses to in-house protest theatrical space, thereby challenging its role in 21st Century media-oriented Africa. Therefore, to fit in-house protest theatrical space within contemporary Marxist context, playwrights need to have a new vision for the future. Playwrights need to produce new performance plays that include elements of propaganda protest literature represented in YouTube or Facebook. An example is Wael Ghonim who did it for Egypt. Though Ghonim's words were not taken from a play text, he posted propaganda protest literature on his Facebook page and it attracted thousands of Egyptians to participate in a political, revolutionary, democratization process in 2011. Moreover, Gordon Grovitz acknowledges the influential contribution of Facebook to the Egyptian 2011 revolution when he states "Facebook was used as a technical means to plan and organize protests" (2011: 2). Most certainly too, Egypt's Tahrir Square political revolution in 2011 attracted many followers through the Internet. In addition, the notion of in-house protest theatrical performance serving as a model that bolsters awareness towards radical political activism has been overshadowed by its out-house counterpart. The reason for this overshadow is obviously the effect of rapidly growing social media influences on political inclined out-house theatrical arenas in contemporary Africa.

Certainly, Egypt's political revolution at Tahrir Square in 2011 attracted many followers through social media outlets. On Abdullah Rasha's Facebook page, some Egyptians confirmed their willingness to participate in the Tahrir Square revolution by writing "I'm attending" (2011: 41). According to Rasha this was a people's revolution and he argues, the revolution was one based on and accelerated by the Internet." (Ibid) Thus, Egypt's case demonstrates that in the 2000s; more discontented masses in Africa are attracted to out-house electro-riot political spaces than in-house performance plays with political undertones because of social media impact on political revolutions.

Therefore, it is imperative for in-house protest theatrical spaces to be renamed traditional *electro-protest theatrical space* or *electro-theatric space* which essentially is *electro-protest theater* given that: the chance that in-house protest performance plays will continue to be tweeted, posted on Facebook and YouTube are very high. Likewise, it is important that out-house protest theatrical spaces be renamed non-traditional *electro-riot theatrical space* or *electro-theatric space* which essentially is *electro-riot theater* given its significant use of social media outlets to influence political revolutions in 21st Century African outdoor spaces. On the whole, playwrights need to continue producing play scripts that reflect these media oriented transitions from the 1990s

to the 2000s and from one historical period to the next.

The popular locale for political protest in 21st Century Africa is in electro-riot street theatrical spaces where the use of social media communication tools usually influences political revolutionary outcomes like Egypt's. In this arena, is found the taxi driver, the university professor, the medical doctor, the university student, the street hawker, the unemployed, and the trader. Interestingly, electro-riot street theatrical performance is attracting not just scholarly critiques, but most importantly discontented indigenous masses that are increasingly debunking the neocolonial bases of authoritarian rule in-out house as opposed to in-house protest theatrical spaces.

Works Cited

- Abdulla, R. The revolution will be tweeted. *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*. Vol 3, pp. 41-49, 2011.
- Allain, P. & Harvie J. *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Allain, P. & Harvie J. *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Blumberg, M. S., & Walder, D. (Eds.). *South African theatre as/and intervention* (Vol. 38). *Rodopi*. p.11, 1999.
- Boal, A. *Theater of the Oppressed*. London, Pluto Press, 2000.
- Butake, B. *And Palm-wine will Flow*. Yaoundé: SOPECAM, 1990.
- Chukwu-Okoronkwo, S. O. Drama and the Rhythms of Social Reality: a Sociological Perspective on Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. *Academic Research International*, 1(3), 16, 2011.
- Cohen-Cruz, J. Notes toward an unwritten history of anti-apartheid street performance. In J. Cohen-Cruz (ed). *Radical Street Performance: An Anthology*. London: Routledge. pp. 282-88, 1998.
- Crovitz, G. L. "Egypt's Revolution by Social Media" *Wall Street Journal*, 14 pp. 1-3, 2011.
- Cummings, Basia. "Burkina Faso's Revolution 2.0." *Guardian Africa Network: The Guardian*. Retrieved. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/30/burkina-faso-protests-president-constitution-power>, 2014.
- Gilpin, D. "Sizwe Bansi is Dead": South Africa under apartheid, resonates powerfully, timelessly in McCarter Revival." in *Town Topics: Princeton's Weekly Community Newspaper Since 1946*. Retrieved from <http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2015/01/28/sizwe-bansi-is-dead-south-africa-under-apartheid-resonates-powerfully-timelessly-in-mccarter-revival/>, 2015.
- Marx, K., and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Wales: Merlin Press, 2012
- Staff, N. P. R. The Arab Spring: A Year of Revolution. *NPR. Last Modified December, 17*. Retrieved from <http://news.wbfo.org/post/arab-spring-year-revolution> 2011.

- Opperman, D. "Revolution and Conscience: South African Theater, June 1976 to February 1990." *Evanston, IL: Program of African Studies* Vol. 5 1993. pp.1-16.
- Plastow, J. *African theatre and politics: The evolution of theatre in Ethiopia Tanzania and Zimbabwe: A comparative study* 24. Rodopi, 1996.
- Steadman, I. "Theater beyond Apartheid". *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 22 (3). 1991. pp. 77-90
- Xia, M. et al. "What's On: Sizwe Bansi is Dead." *Young Vic*. Retrieved from <http://www.youngvic.org/whats-on/sizwe-banzi-is-dead>, 2014

List of Contributors

Arndt, Susan (PhD)

Susan Arndt is Professor of English and Anglophone Literatures at the University of Bayreuth. Her research focuses mainly on West African womens' writing, whiteness and race. Amongst other ground-breaking works, she is author of *The dynamics of African feminism: defining and classifying African-feminist literatures*

Christopher, Odhiambo Joseph (PhD)

Odhiambo Joseph Christopher is Professor of Literature and Applied Drama at Moi University's Department of Literature, Theatre and Film Studies. He has published widely in the fields of Literature, Applied Drama/Theatre, Popular Culture and Film. He has presented papers and keynote addresses on various topics in Literature, Theatre and Popular Culture in conferences and Seminars. Professor Odhiambo was a recipient of the 2007 Melon Research Fellowship at Wits University's Department of African Literature and Dramatic Art Division. In 2013 he was awarded Wits University's SPARC Distinguished Scholar Award. He is also an Alexander van Humboldt Senior Research Fellow.

Dasi, Eleanor Anneh

Eleanor Anneh Dasi holds a PhD in Commonwealth Literary Studies from the University of Yaounde I, Cameroon in 2011. She is a senior lecturer at The Higher Teachers Training College, University of Yaounde I where she teaches courses on Literature and Society, Literature and Philosophy, Literary Appreciation, African American Literature and English for Academic Purposes. Her research areas are on postcolonial Literatures in English, gender and feminist literatures.

Dounla, Didymus Tsangue (MA)

Didymus Tsangue Dounla is postgraduate student at the University of Yaoundé 1. His area of interest is Commonwealth Studies.

Dugga, Victor S. (PhD)

Victor S. Dugga is one of the pioneers of advancement practice in Nigeria and served for eight years as Executive Director of Advancement at the University of Jos. In that capacity, he raised funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to develop the university's alumni relations, marketing and fundraising. Dugga is

an awardee of the Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship, UK and Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) Fellowship, Germany. He has received funding for research from the Association of African Universities (AAU). He won the Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Drama in 2009 for his play, *Hope Harvesters*. From 2010 to 2012, he has served on the Panel of Judges for ANA literary awards. He obtained bachelor's and masters' degrees in Theater Arts from the University of Jos, Nigeria, masters' from University of Essex, United Kingdom; a doctorate from University of Bayreuth, Germany, and a postgraduate diploma in monitoring and evaluation from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. In 2013, Dugga was Alexander von Humboldt Fellow in Germany. Professor Dugga is immediate past Dean, Faculty of Arts at the Federal University Lafia, Nigeria. He continues to write creative and critical works in the fields of theatre, literary theory and cultural studies.

Forti, Etienne Langmia

Etienne Langmia Forti is a holder of a PhD in Commonwealth Literature from the University of Yaounde I. His current research endeavor is on the multi-dimensional challenges post-apartheid South Africa faces in its efforts to attain nationhood at the backdrop of the divisions implanted by apartheid. His continued interest in South Africa's race and political literature is evidenced by an on-going research based on a comparison of the country's older and younger generations of black writers vis-a-vis the notions of a nation and nationhood.

Gomia, Victor N. (PhD)

Victor N. Gomia is an Associate Professor of English at the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Delaware State University, USA. He teaches World Literature, African-American Literature, and Contemporary Literature. Prior to joining DSU in 2011, he had taught at Kentucky State University, Argosy University and Bowie State University. Among awards received by him are Scholarship and Publication Award from DSU and Residency Award from Howard University's African Studies Center. His research interests include Development Theater, Popular Literature, Literary Theory and International Development. He has published a book and numerous articles in peer reviewed journals.

Langmia, Irmagard Anchang

Irmagard Anchang Langmia holds a Masters in English from the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon. She has taught English in High Schools in Cameroon and North America. She has also taught undergraduate English Composition courses at Bowie State University, Maryland. Currently, she is adjunct instructor of English at Anne Arundel Community College, Maryland where she teaches English composition courses. She is pursuing a PhD in Education at North Central University. Her present research work is on Re-imagining Conflicts on Female Genital Mutilation

in Contemporary Africa with a focus on Pede Hollist's *So the Path Does Not Die*. Her published works include a poetry collection: *Visions in my Mind's Eye* (2011), a poem in "A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics:" "Under the Boabab Tree" (2012) and other published poems, an article, and a short story. She has written an introduction and a literary biography for two of Joseph Anchangnyuoh Ngongwikuo's novels,

Ndi Shang, Gilbert (PhD)

Gilbert Ndi Shang is a scholar in Comparative Literature from the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), University of Bayreuth, Germany. Between 2015 and 2017 he was Fritz Thyssen Postdoctoral Fellow at the Chair of Francophone Literatures/Comparative Studies of the same university. His research interests include: the African dictatorship novel, literature and politics, politics/poetics of the body, violence in literature, visual culture and cyber literature. The scope of his research principally covers parts of Africa and Latin America. He is currently a member of the Junges Kolleg of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (Munich) and a Feodor Lynen Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in La Universidad de los Andes, Bogota-Columbia. His outstanding research work earned him a recognition at the annual DAAD fellows meeting in Bayreuth in April 2017.

Neba, Divine Che (PhD)

Divine Che Neba is a senior lecturer in African and Comparative Literature at the University of Yaounde 1. His area of interest includes African Literature and World Mythology. He has published many articles in national and international Journals.

Nsah, Kenneth Toah (MA)

Kenneth Toah Nsah is a writer under the pen name Nsah Mala. He is a language teacher, literary student and youth leader; Presently he is enrolled in the Erasmus Mundus Master Crossways in Cultural Narratives at Université de Perpignan Via Domitia (France), University of St Andrews (UK) and Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

Orji-Mba, Onwukah Benjamin (MA)

Onwuka Benjamin Orji-Mba is an Assistant Lecturer at the Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, where he teaches Nigerian Literature, African drama, Comparative Literature, Popular Culture and the Mass Media, and African Oral Literature. He is a Ph.D. student of Literature in English at the University of Abuja, Nigeria. His research interests include: interface between African Oral and Written Literatures, Literary Stylistics, Literary Theory and Criticism and Comparative Literature.

Osofisan, Femi (PhD)

Femi Osofisan is a critic, poet, novelist, and playwright. He is noted for his critique of societal problems and his use of African traditional performances and surrealism in some of his novels. A frequent theme that his novels explore is the conflict between good and evil. He is a professor of drama at the University of Ibadan.

Tangem, Donatus Fai (PhD)

Donatus Fai Tangem is Senior Lecturer of Drama/Theatre, Cinema and Cultural Studies at the Department of Arts and Archeology, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon. He is a playwright, Actor, Theatre Director, Theatre practitioner and film producer. Besides his professional duties, Dr. Tangem is civil/human right activist and coordinator of National Traveling Theatre, (NATT). His research interests include pop culture, conflict, peace and indigenous knowledge systems.

Tangwa, Edwin Ntumfon (PhD)

Edwin Ntumfon Tangwa is a part-time lecturer of postcolonial literature and literary theory and criticism in the department of English in the University of Yaounde I. His research work focuses on race, ethnicity, culture and globalization. He has published in the *Journal of African Literature and Culture* and in *Migration, Culture and Transnational Identities: Critical Essays*. His Ph.D. thesis is a comparative analysis of globalization, race and ethnicity in selected works of V.S. Naipaul and Bessie Head. He has taught English language and literature in several international schools in Cameroon. He is also a freelance translator volunteering for the United Nations.

Yimbu, Emmanuel Nchia (PhD)

Emmanuel Nchia Yimbu is an established “Professeur de Lycee” who obtained a Ph.D. in Postcolonial Studies from the Department of English, The University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon in 2013. He has served as an English Language and Literature teacher in Cameroon’s Ministry of Secondary Education. He is presently a visiting lecturer of Postcolonial Literature and Criticism in the Cheikh Abdel Halim Higher Institute of Education in Abu Dhabi. His research interest areas include Postcolonial Literatures, Literary Theory and Criticism and Education.

Zuhmboshi, Eric Nsuh (PhD)

Eric Nsuh Zuhmboshi is a senior lecturer in the Department of African Literature and Civilizations, the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon. His areas of research interest include cultural studies, critical theory, and political ideology. He is passionate about interdisciplinarity. His recent research work focuses on the interconnections between literature, the social sciences, and law. He has published widely in national and international journals

Index

- Achebe, Chinua 58, 60, 70, 103, 112, 124
 activism 30, 36, 40, 218, 231
 Aesthetics 54, 204
 African-American Drama 36
 African diasporas 2, 3
 African diasporic cultures 2
 African diasporic literatures 3. *See also* African diasporic cultures
 African gender theory 143
 African Literature Association
 ALA xiv, xv, 96, 98, 99, 107, 108, 109
 African National Congress 5, 199
 African nationalist discourses 143
 African Renaissance 122, 124
 Afuh, M. 142, 154
 Ahidjo, A. 38, 39, 131, 132, 200
 Aidoo, Ama Ata xii
 Alobwed'Epie viii, 7, 142, 143, 144, 148, 150, 151, 152, 154
 alterity 172
 Amadu Bello Univeristy 195
 Ambanasom, S. 21, 27, 41, 98, 99, 109, 142, 154
 Ambanasom, Shadrack 27
 Ancient Egypt 114, 117
 Anglophone vii, xiv, 4, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 204, 228, 235
 Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights 25
 Anglophone marginalization 25
 Anglophones in Cameroon 4, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 39, 41. *See also* Anglophones
 Apartheid vii, 72, 95, 110, 217, 223, 224, 225, 226, 229, 230, 233
 Applied Theater 205, 206, 207, 208, 209
 Arabic 174, 176
 Arab Spring 219, 220, 221, 227, 232
 Arendt, Hannah 93
 Armah vii, 6, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124
 Armah, Ayi Kwei vii, 6, 111, 123, 124
 Arndt, Susan xiv, xv, 4, 235
 Ashuntantang, J. 98, 99, 101, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110
 audiovisual forms 213
 authoritarian 126 129, 134, 136, 220, 222, 230, 232
 Bakhtin, M. 112, 124
 Bamenda 24, 39, 41, 109, 110, 154, 200, 201, 228
 Baraka, Amiri vii, 4, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 33, 41
 Bayreuth vii, x, xi, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 107, 204, 207, 235, 236, 237
 Bebey, Francis 99
 Besong, Bate vii, 4, 5, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 37, 39, 56, 61, 63, 67, 98, 99
 Bethune, Mary McLeod 160
 Beti, Mongo viii, xii, 6, 58, 98, 99, 125, 127, 131, 132, 136, 138, 139, 140
 Bhabha, Homi K. 93, 94, 95, 173, 186
 binaries 73, 80, 85, 86, 92, 182
 Biya, Paul 131
 Black Economic Empowerment 86
 Black oppression 29
 Bloch, Ernst 117, 124
 Botswana 8, 11, 13, 15, 188, 189, 190,

- 193, 194, 199, 204
 bourgeoisie 125, 126, 130, 140, 197
 Brazil 209
 Brecht, Bertolt 192, 205, 206, 208
 Breitinger, Eckhard xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xv,
 4, 10, 14
 Buea 11, 13, 38, 105, 109, 228
 Burkina Faso 8, 218, 219, 221, 225,
 227, 228, 230, 232
 Butake, Bole viii, 8, 13, 58, 100, 107,
 200, 201, 217, 222, 229, 232
- Cameroon vii, xii, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15,
 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 32,
 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 68, 96, 97,
 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104,
 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110,
 131, 132, 149, 150, 155, 188,
 199, 200, 201, 213, 218, 222,
 223, 228, 229, 235, 236, 238
 Cameroon Anglophone literature 96,
 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103,
 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109
 Cameroon Radio and Television 223
 Cameroun Francophone literature 98,
 99
 CAMLIT 99, 107, 110
 Caribbean islands 2
 Casting the Net of Knowledge Pro-
 duction 12
 Chipata Theatre Workshop 193
 Christianity 5, 9, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60,
 61, 63, 66, 145, 177
 colonial discourse theory 7
 colonialism 1, 25, 113, 117, 122, 125,
 134, 136, 140, 147, 156, 171,
 217. *See also* Postcolonialism
 coloniality of power 6, 111
 Comaroff, Jean & John 1
 communal consciousness 70
 communication gadgets 218, 226, 228
 community empowerment 212
 Compaore, Blaise 221, 228
 conscientization 50, 51, 54, 67, 224
 consciousness 43, 46, 47, 49, 63, 64,
 66, 67, 69, 70, 88, 114, 115,
 119, 121, 126, 142, 143, 150,
 153, 154, 171, 172, 173, 197,
 198, 203, 224, 225
 corruption 47, 48, 70, 84, 112, 114,
 115, 117, 118, 150, 151, 194,
 195, 222
 Creolization 173, 187
 critical pedagogy 209. *See also* peda-
 gogy
 Cuba 209
 cultural domination 56. *See also* West-
 ern modernity
 culture xiii, 1, 2, 5, 8, 12, 14, 16, 24,
 41, 43, 44, 45, 56, 57, 60, 78, 88,
 121, 122, 126, 147, 154, 155,
 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162,
 163, 164, 165, 166, 168, 169,
 170, 172, 179, 181, 191, 192,
 195, 196, 198, 205, 214, 224,
 237, 238
- David and Goliath 65
 decadence 112, 145, 222
 decolonization process, the xiii, 1, 125
 deconstructive criticism 3
 De Klerk, F.W. 86, 225
 democracy 67, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80,
 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91,
 92, 93, 120, 126, 139, 188, 203,
 218, 222
 Democratic Republic of Congo 98,
 225
 democratization 3, 80, 218, 220, 221,
 222, 224, 225, 228, 230, 231
 democratization processes in Africa 3
 Development Theater 8, 188, 189,
 193, 194, 201, 202, 236
 Dewey, John 209, 210
 de-womanisation 144
 dialogue xi, 21, 24, 34, 62, 119, 138,
 160, 201, 202, 221
 diasporic subjects 171, 172. *See*
also diaspora
 dictatorship 25, 31, 33, 66, 68, 69, 70,
 126, 131, 139, 222, 237
 Dipoko, Mbella Sonne 99, 100, 155
 dream 38, 65, 114, 119, 121, 123, 126,
 129, 158, 170, 175, 184, 185,
 223
 Durkheim, Emile 56, 71

Dystopia viii, 6, 125

EduArt Award 106

Egypt 8, 98, 114, 117, 181, 218, 219,
220, 221, 225, 227, 230, 231,
232

Eko Foundation 106

electro-riot 219, 220, 221, 222, 223,
224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230,
231, 232

electro-riot political spaces 224, 225,
228, 231

empowerment 88, 152, 162, 166, 212

Endeley, E.M.L. 23

Engels, Friedrich 71, 222, 232

equality 5, 7, 22, 28, 37, 73, 82, 88,
91, 93, 114, 116, 120, 143, 147,
148, 149, 164, 165

between men and women 164

ethics 122, 149

Ethnicity 159

European capitalism 6, 111

everyday life 125, 127

exile 91, 131, 138, 212

exploitation of the masses 49, 50, 70

Eyoh, Hansel N. 99, 195, 196, 197,
200, 201, 202, 203, 204

Facebook 217, 219, 220, 221, 222,
223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229,
230, 231

Fanon, Frantz 130, 141

Farah, Nuruddin xii

Federal Constitution 40

female consciousness 143

femalism 143

femininity 150

feminism xiv, 4, 143, 154, 156, 158,
163, 164, 165, 167, 235

feminist scholarship 142

fictionalization 120

folktale 2

Foncha, John Ngu 22, 27, 39

Fonlon, Bernard 107, 109

Fonlon-Nichols Award 107

Foumban 21, 22, 24, 28, 37, 39, 40

fragmentation 44, 111, 117, 120

Francophone 21, 28, 29, 32, 96, 98,
99, 100, 101, 108, 131, 204, 237

freedom 23, 29, 36, 37, 53, 57, 63, 67,
69, 70, 72, 73, 79, 82, 87, 88, 90,
107, 116, 128, 134, 142, 147,
153, 170, 184, 185, 203, 223

Freire, Paulo 194, 202, 209, 211

Fru Ndi, John 228

Fugard, Athol viii, 8, 217, 223, 225,
232

future 6, 8, 20, 22, 38, 44, 47, 54, 69,
70, 76, 77, 78, 80, 90, 91, 111,
112, 113, 117, 119, 120, 121,
122, 123, 133, 159, 169, 170,
181, 182, 215, 219, 222, 229,
231

Garvey, Marcus 29

gender roles 158

generic 2

German Academic Exchange Service
xii, 4, 10

Ghana xii, xiii, 98, 113, 121

Gilroy, P 172

globalization viii xiv, 3, 4, 7, 104, 156,
157, 158, 159, 161 163, 164,
167, 168, 173, 238

glocalization 3

Gordimer, Nadine vii, 5, 72

Hansberry, Lorraine 20

Hegel, Georg W. F. 172

Historical Mythopoeia vii, 4, 18

historicity of the text 18

historiography 5

history 1, 2, 5, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,
24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35,
36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45,
46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,
54, 60, 63, 64, 68, 69, 72, 74, 90,
113, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120,
122, 123, 128, 132, 154, 170,
171, 173, 181, 196, 198, 206,
211, 212, 232

HIV-AIDS 13

homelessness 84, 87, 172, 173

humanism 192, 193, 216

humanity 30, 120, 143, 148, 150
 hybrid 2, 93, 192

idealism 115
 indigenous consumers 219, 228
 introspection 2, 111

Jua, Augustine Ngom 23
 Judeo-Christian myths 178

Kamerun National Democratic Party 23
 Kamiriithu 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 211, 212
 Kane, Cheikh Hamidou 132
 Kaunda, K. 191
 Kenya xii, 8, 10, 11, 13, 62, 98, 107, 188, 196, 199, 212
 Kiguli, Susan 13
 KKK 29, 30
 knowledge system 157, 207
 African 207
 koranic myths 177
 Kumba 27, 199, 200, 201

Labang, Oscar 96, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109
 leadership 5, 6, 23, 46, 54, 58, 67, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 121, 127, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 192, 221, 222
 LeRoy, G. C. 130, 131, 141
 liberation 5, 7, 31, 36, 63, 84, 132, 157, 158, 161
 literary criticism xi, 2, 3, 107, 130, 207
 Literature, African xiv, xv, 54, 55, 96, 98, 99, 100, 107, 108, 109, 120, 124, 127, 141, 176, 207, 215, 235, 237, 238
 location 12, 33, 159, 163, 173, 195, 222
 longue durée 115, 121
 Lumumba, Patrice 119, 120, 121

madness 115, 133, 137
 Malawi xii, 11, 13, 14, 15, 199
 Mandela, Nelson 68, 73, 79, 83, 225, 226
 Manichaean opposition 116
 marginality 29, 96, 97, 99, 101, 102, 106, 107, 108
 marginalization 1, 5, 25, 30, 38, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 104, 108, 156, 157, 160, 161, 163, 168, 172
 marriage 143, 146, 151, 166, 179
 Marxist hermeneutics 130
 Marxist thought 3
 Marx, Karl 60, 71, 222, 232
 maternity 146
 Mazrui, Ali A. 125, 141
 memory v, x, 6, 7, 22, 32, 111, 119, 120, 123, 169, 170, 173, 206
 Meredith, Martin 127, 128, 140, 141
 Merits of Summer School, The 13
 Mhlongo, Nicholas vii, 5, 72
 Middle East 220
 Migo, Micere Githae 15
 mobilization 51, 188, 189, 202, 206
 modernity 7, 145, 154, 164
 Moi, Daniel Arab 198
 Moi University 11, 13, 15, 235
 motherhood 143, 146, 147, 151, 163, 166
 Moumie, Felix-Roland 22, 37
 multiracial democracy 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93. *See also* South African democracy
 multiracialism 93
 Muna, Solomon Tandeng 22
 Murewa workshop 199, 200
 Muslim community 176
 Muslim identity 176, 177, 182
 Mythic Imagination viii, 7, 169
 mythoform 8, 170, 172, 176, 177, 179, 180, 183, 186
 mythology 169, 176

 Namibia 189
 nation-building process 73, 77, 80, 81, 85, 90, 92

- natural justice 151
 Ndongmo, Albert 23
 neoliberalism 4
 Netflix 219, 230
 Networking 13
 New-Historicist approach, the 5
 New World 19, 31, 33, 34
 Ngoh, Julius 38
 Ngome, Victor Epie 40
 Ngugi wa Mirii 196, 198, 211
 Ngugi wa Thiong'o xii, 11, 17, 57, 62,
 71, 122, 124, 127, 140, 141,
 196, 198, 211, 212, 215
 Nigeria xii, 8, 10, 13, 22, 23, 38, 46,
 51, 52, 54, 55, 98, 188, 193, 194,
 196, 199, 228, 235, 236, 237
 Nkrumah, Kwame 29, 57, 125
 Nollywood 228, 229
 North-South Knowledge production
 11
 Ntumazah, Ndeh 23
- oligarchy 6, 140
 oppression 4, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33,
 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 59, 61, 63, 64,
 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 90, 120,
 125, 129, 144, 148, 149, 171,
 172, 197
 Osiris 111, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120,
 121, 123, 124
 Osofisan, Femi vii, ix, xii, 5, 43, 44, 45,
 52, 54, 55, 238
 Ouandie, Ernest 21, 22, 37
 Oyo Empire 46
 Oyono, Ferdinand 58, 71, 98, 99, 192
- Pan-African vii, 6, 111, 114, 115, 116,
 117, 120, 123
 Pan-Africanistic dimension 121
 participation 15, 73, 97, 107, 151, 189,
 192, 193, 202, 203, 206, 209
 paternity 145
 patriarchal values 156
 patriarchy 142, 143, 144, 147, 149,
 151, 156, 161, 167
 peace-building 206
 pedagogy 209, 210
- performance 4, 122, 194, 197, 200,
 203, 208, 211, 217, 218, 219,
 221, 222, 223, 225, 226, 227,
 228, 229, 230, 231, 232
 Philosophy 206, 215, 235
 Place of History in Literature, The 19
 Police State viii, 6, 125, 141
 political regeneration 120
 politics viii, 6, 7, 11, 28, 57, 78, 91, 92,
 111, 113, 117, 123, 127, 130,
 139, 156, 207, 213, 218, 233,
 237
 Popular Theater 200, 205
 post-apartheid South Africa 5, 73, 78,
 79, 88, 92, 93, 236
 postcolonial xi, xiv, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,
 14, 48, 57, 59, 63, 64, 68, 70, 73,
 80, 84, 85, 88, 92, 96, 97, 99,
 103, 108, 111, 125, 126, 127,
 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133,
 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139,
 140, 141, 150, 156, 157, 159,
 160, 168, 170, 172, 173, 174,
 175, 176, 177, 180, 181, 186,
 188, 202, 235, 238. *See also* co-
 lonialism
 postcolonial diaspora 7, 170, 172, 180
 postcolonial education 2. *See*
 also Postcolonial knowledge
 postcolonial era 48, 127, 140
 postcoloniality 99
 postcolonial knowledge xiv
 postcolony 1, 2
 postdiasporic identity 7, 170, 183,
 185, 186
 postmodernism 4
 protest 3, 8, 9, 18, 40, 51, 72, 135, 147,
 193, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221,
 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227,
 228, 229, 230, 231, 232
 theatrical 8
- Quijano, Anibal 6, 111
- Rabinow, P. 1, 9
 radical philosophy 209, 210
 rape 28, 144, 152, 176

- religion xiii, 3, 5, 51, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 70, 152, 164, 176, 181, 184
 Religion as a Tool for Colonial and Neocolonial Leadership Politics 56
 religious denomination 145
 religious motif 48
 re-membering 119, 120, 122
 resistance 3, 20, 30, 67, 68, 72, 112, 115, 139, 211, 224, 225
 revolution 26, 31, 32, 47, 48, 54, 64, 67, 68, 69, 70, 113, 114, 117, 119, 121, 122, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 227, 228, 231, 232
 Revolutionary Motifs vii, 43
 Rhodesia 191
 Robben Island 87
 Roman Catholicism 146
 Rotimi, Ola 45, 55, 223
 Russia 128, 179
- Said, Edward 7, 156, 157, 158, 168
 Sankara, Thomas 121
 second-class citizenship status 21
 Selassie, Emperor Haile 60, 64, 66, 67
 Senghor, Leopold S. 208, 216
 sexual binaries 182. *See also* binaries
 slavery 20, 31, 36, 52, 65, 66, 67, 116, 117, 122, 165, 171, 175, 176, 183, 186
 smart phones 218
 Soba 194, 195
 Social Democratic Front 132, 223, 228
 social media 2, 8, 9, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232
 sociology xiii, 132
 sociopolitical consciousness
 consciousness 126
 South Africa vii, xiii, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 37, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 98, 172, 189, 193, 199, 215, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 229, 230, 232, 236
 South African democracy 73, 80, 85.
 See also South Africa
 South African theater 225, 229
 South America 202
 Southern Cameroonians 37
 Southern Cameroons 23, 32, 38, 39, 40
 Soweto 74, 75, 76, 83, 85, 224
 Soyinka, Wole xii, 169
 Stellenbosch University 11, 12, 13
 stigmatization 143, 145
 subjectivity 139, 142
 Summer School Concept 14
 surveillance 15, 134
- Tahrir Square 219, 220, 221, 222, 227, 231
 Tala, Kashim Ibrahim 100
 Tande, D. 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 109, 110
 Theater for Development xii, 8, 198, 205, 208. *See also* Development Theater
 Theater in Education 205
 Theater of the Oppressed 205, 232
 Theater for Development 14, 16, 190, 199, 204, 215
 Thielmann, Pia xiii
 Touré, Sekou 121
 transformation 12, 43, 65, 85, 86, 91, 93, 112, 121, 181, 212
 Traore, Bakary 43
 Trauma and Identity Crisis in Diaspora 173
 Triple Marginality in Cameroon Anglophone Literature vii, 96, 97
 Tunisia 219, 220, 221, 225
 Tutu, Desmond 73, 75, 95
 Twitter 217, 219, 220, 221, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 231
- Uganda xii, xiii, 10, 13
 Um Nyobe 21, 22, 23, 24, 37
- voter education 206

- Walcott, Derek vii, xii, 5, 56, 59, 63,
 64, 67
 Wangusa, Ayeta 14
 Wasan Manoma 193, 194
 Western education 157, 164
 Western Europe xii
 western feminist ideology 167
 Western feminist ideology 168
 Western literary tradition 129
 Western literature 2
 Western modernity 7. *See also* West-
 ern Europe
 Western religious ideology 5
 West Indian 60, 61, 66
 Whatsapp 229
 womanhood 7, 146, 148, 149, 150,
 152, 153, 157, 158, 163, 164,
 167
 womanism 143
 Women's Information and Coordina-
 tion Office 200
 worldview 2, 50, 57, 80, 166, 168, 169
- Yaoundé 105, 201, 213, 214, 222, 223,
 229, 232, 235, 236, 238
 Yoruba 44, 46, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 108
 Yoruba history 44, 46.
 YouTube 219, 221, 224, 225, 226, 227,
 228, 229, 230, 231
- Zambia 8, 188, 189, 191, 192, 193,
 194
 Zimbabwe 8, 188, 189, 191, 193, 198,
 199, 200, 203, 204, 233

Re-writing Pasts, Imagining Futures

Critical Explorations of Contemporary African Fiction and Theater

Edited by Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi

Victor Gomia and Gilbert Ndi's *Re-writing Pasts, Imagining Futures: Critical Explorations of Contemporary Fiction and Theater*, written in celebration of the life of the distinguished German Africanist, Eckhard Breitingner of Bayreuth University, is truly a critical exploration which bridges and unites the two continents in a unique, yet intellectually challenging fashion.... The text is a landmark ready for exploration and consumption, and it rekindles in old minds a desire for youthful inquiry and in the old a desire for precocious maturity in literary gallantry.

—**EMMANUEL NGWANG**, Professor of English and Director of Quality Enhancement Plan, Texas College

The essays collected here appraise the vectors of African and African diasporic fiction and theatre while honoring the lifework of Eckard Breitingner whose career was devoted to understanding Africa's complexity as a scholar, teacher, and publisher. Students and scholars of African literature and performance studies will appreciate the diverse currents of ideas in the book and the unity of the essays under the rubric of the social conditioning of African cultural productions. Victor Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi, both former students of Breitingner, deserve our gratitude for this labor of love.

—**CAJETAN IHEKA**, author of *Naturalizing Africa, Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (Cambridge University Press)

This is a timely publication which rekindles a conversation that has preoccupied lots of literary scholars. For decades, students and professionals studying African literature have employed the post-colonial lens to process any work that has been produced on the African continent and/or by people of African descent... This is an ideal textbook selection for a 21st century college or university class investigating African literature. It is a comprehensive and contemporary overview of the literary masterpieces, and the book does so with an eye to the future. The editors and their contributing authors deserve commendation.

—**DAVID BASENA**, Chair, Department of English and Modern Languages, Bowie State University

VICTOR N. GOMIA is an Associate Professor of English at the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Delaware State University, USA.

GILBERT SHANG NDI is a scholar in Comparative Literature from the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), University of Bayreuth, Germany.

Cover Design by Spears Media



Spears Media Press
Denver, Colorado
spearsmedia.com
info@spearsmedia.com

ISBN 978-1-942876-18-2

90000



9 781942 876182